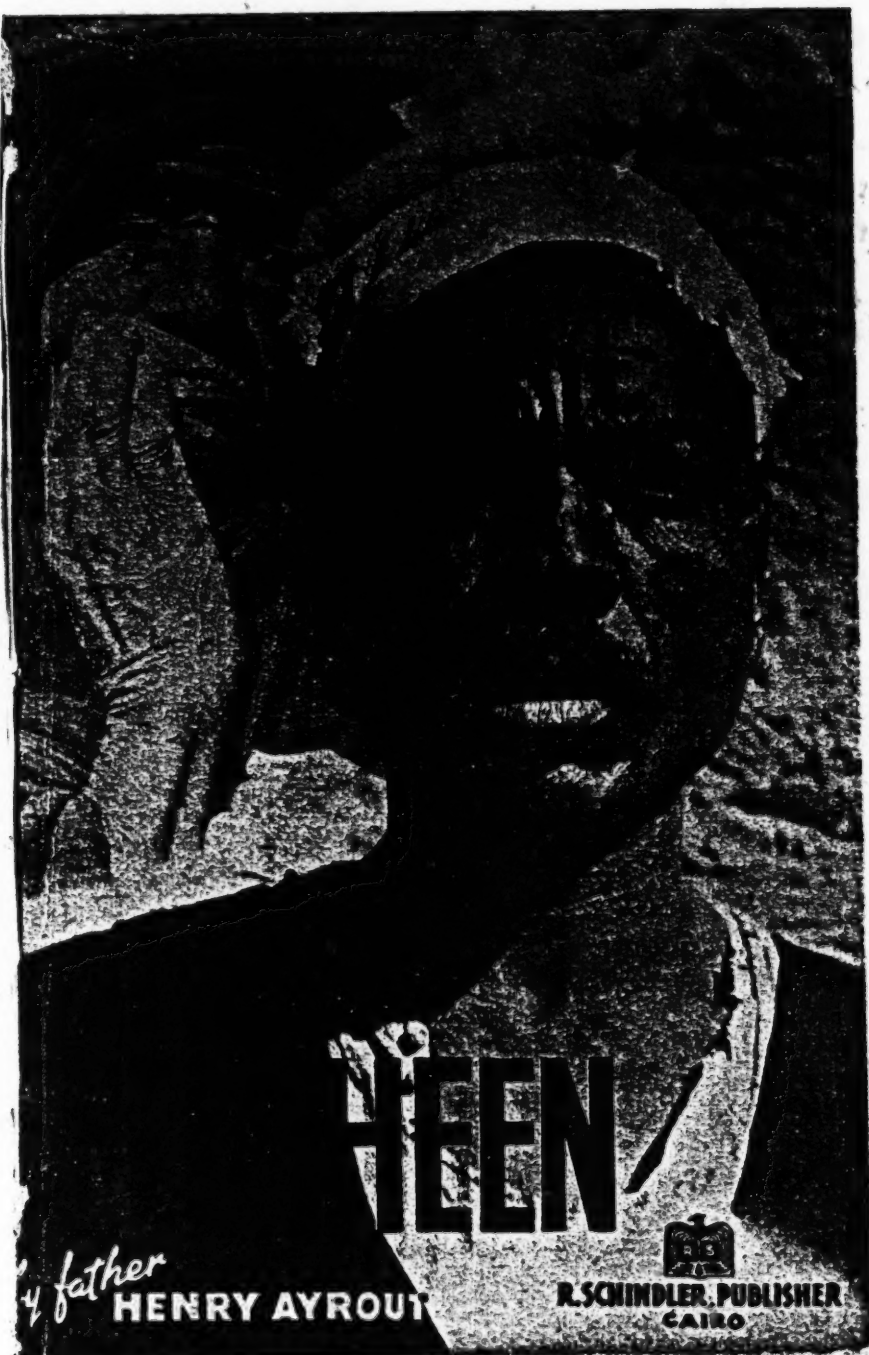


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MR13 Fellahin MR13

THE FELLAHEEN

BY

HENRY HABIB-AYROUT, S.J.

TRANSLATED

BY

HILARY WAYMENT

WITH A FOREWORD

BY

M. TAHER PASHA

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R. SCHINDLER, PUBLISHER - CAIRO

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FOREWORD

The "Fellaheen" of Egypt are the oldest peasantry ¹⁰¹ in the world. History teaches us this, and also that the Valley of the Nile shows the oldest records of civilised and cultural life.

Throughout thousands of years our peasantry has kept ¹⁸³ its customs, habits, character, and type in a remarkably steady manner.

It is still essentially what it was in the far-distant Pharaonic days : one of the two main pillars of Egypt's wealth and well-being. The other, as Herodotus remarked long ago, is the river Nile.

A great deal has been said about the Fellah, particu- ¹¹⁴ larly during the last few decades, and there is a vast amount of literature about Egypt and its people. Seldom, however, has a writer devoted his main interest to the study of the Egyptian peasant as a human type, looking at him, his character, his culture and traditions, with sympathy, objectivity, and an unbiased view.

The present book fills this gap in the literature about ^{ooo} our country. We owe its author our sincerest thanks.

The more one really studies the Fellaheen of Egypt, the more one will discard a lot of mistaken ideas about their character. Now that the country has come to a turning-point of its history, it is essential that its people as a whole should be fully aware of the tremendous task ahead of them. A complete and intimate collaboration among all classes, a particularly sympathetic understanding — and not just a platonic one — of their peasantry by the upper class and landowners, is the basis and most important element of this patriotic cooperation. The "Fellah", whether as a small — and how small! — landowner or as an agri-

208 cultural labourer, is the main factor in the country's welfare and progress. If any of the numerous blueprints piled up, in modern, and sometimes luxurious, Government offices are to become realities one day, it will be through the labour of thousands and thousands of Fellaheen. As already remarked, much has been said about the Fellah, but little has been done. It is high time to get to work, wholeheartedly and energetically

To all those who honestly and earnestly desire to serve our country this book will give valuable guidance.

I congratulate the author on his work and wish it the widest possible circulation.

M. Taher Pasha.

[page 6]

AUTHOR'S PREFACE

In 1938, after having been offered as a thesis for the ¹¹⁴ Doctorate of Letters in the University of Lyons, this book was published by Payot, Paris, under the title of *MŒURS ET COUTUMES DES FELLAHS*.

This work, with an admirable foreword by Monsieur André Allix, based on a real affection for the Egyptian fellah, was the result of many years study and observation of these people. In writing it, our intention was not merely to enlighten and inform, but also to indicate the beginnings of a plan of action.

Today, having under our care a hundred elementary schools in Upper Egypt, and visiting each month many far-distant villages, we aim at putting into practice the fundamental idea set out in this book. In the present education of our fellahs, we strive to draw closer together what we call "Outside Egypt" — ourselves — and "Inside Egypt" — the fellah.

The demand for the book very soon outran the supply, and there was an increasing demand for a new edition. Consequently, in 1942, a revised edition, with a preface by H.E. Fuad Abaza Pasha, was published in Cairo by "Horus" under the title of *Fellahs*. In the following year there appeared an Arabic translation from the competent pen of Mohammad Ghallab, Professor of Philosophy at the University of Al Azhar. This edition was enriched with many notes by this eminent Professor.

Now, to meet the desire often expressed by English-speaking readers, we publish the present translation, which, although contemplated for some time, has only recently been completed. The translator, Mr Hilary Wayment, is

[page 7]

114 known to many readers here for his book *Egypt Now*, published during the war. It shows him to be thoroughly conversant with the life and problems of the fellah.

This English edition is a translation of the latest French version, with additional notes. May it enlighten its readers and bring them to an affectionate and helpful understanding of the fellaheen, a people who live under the same skies and on the same soil as ourselves.

[page 8]

CONTENTS

FOREWORD by M. Taher Pasha. 000

AUTHOR'S PREFACE.

TRANSLATOR'S PREFACE.

INTRODUCTION : On Understanding the Fellah.

- CHAPTER I. Changelessness.
- „ II. The Physical Background.
I. Geographical — II. Ethnological.
- „ III. The Social and Political Background.
- „ IV. The Fellah and His Work.
I. Kinds of Work. — II. Conditions of Work.
- „ V. The Fellah as a Person.
I. Race and Type— II. Care and Clothing of the Body. — III. Health and Sickness. IV. Food and Drink.
- „ VI. The Village and the Peasant Group.
- „ VII. The Fellah at Home.
- „ VIII. Traditions of the Soil.
- „ IX. The Psychology of the Fellah.
- „ X. The Fellah and Progress.

CONCLUSION : The Distress of the Fellah.

APPENDICES.

- A. Note on Mourning Customs,
by E. Fellert, S.J.
- B. Dirge for a Young Man.

NOTES.

GLOSSARY.

[page 9]

TRANSLATOR'S PREFACE

At the end of last century there appeared in France ¹¹⁴ a book entitled *Le Fellah*. This book describes the life of an Egyptian aristocrat educated in France, who precisely because he had lost touch with the fellaheen and was in almost every way their antithesis, took a perverse pride in calling himself a fellah. It is typical of the lack of interest in the fellaheen which most writers about Egypt have shown that this book should have been cited in a whole chain of bibliographies as if it were a fundamental study of the fellaheen and life in the Egyptian countryside. One can only suppose that the writers had never seen a copy of the book, let alone read it.

The fact is that the serious study of rural society in Egypt has only just begun. It is over a century since Lane published his admirable book on *The Manners and Customs of the Modern Egyptians*, but this deals largely with the life of the upper classes in Cairo. After the first World War an Englishwoman, Miss W.M. Blackman, went to live for several years in the Egyptian countryside before writing *The Fellahin of Upper Egypt* (Harrap, 1927). But Miss Blackman approached the fellaheen more as an anthropologist than as a sociologist, and was much more impressed by the superstitious practices which bind them to the past than by the actual pattern of their social existence.

Father Ayrout's book first appeared in 1938 under the title *Mœurs et Coutumes des Fellahs* in the *Collection d'études, de documents et de témoignages pour servir à l'histoire de notre temps*, published by Payot, Paris. It was accepted at once, not only in France but also in Egypt, as a standard work on the fellaheen, and in 1942, in response to widespread demand, it was republished by "Horus" of Cairo in a revised edition entitled *Fellahs*.

Father Ayrout was the first to attempt a full-length study of the life of the fellaheen in all its main aspects. Born an Egyptian of Syrian origin, and speaking both French

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114 and Arabic, he has taught for many years in Cairo and paid regular visits to a number of elementary schools in the villages of Upper Egypt. He is thus peculiarly fitted to interpret Egypt to the West, and to describe from within the dusty everyday life of the fellaheen, which ninety-nine Europeans out of a hundred must look upon with distant, alien eyes from the windows of a car or railway-carriage.

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121 As a social document this book is agreed to have no rival, but its theoretical assumptions and conclusions have proved less generally acceptable. In particular Father Ayrout stresses the changelessness of fellah life, though it would be easy to show that in the century and a half which have passed since Napoleon visited Egypt, there has been a process of economic and technical change in the Egyptian countryside which cannot have left the fellah himself unmoved, and is likely in any case to have far-reaching social effects in the decades to come. I have transgressed the limits of a translator's function in revising a passage at the end of the second chapter in which Father Ayrout argues that over-population cannot prove to be a serious problem in Egypt for at least a generation. If the present social and economic set-up remains unchanged, I am convinced that it will. However, since this book was first written the discovery of high-grade iron ore in the desert near Aswan has changed the whole basis of the argument. It will not be long, one hopes, before the great weight of water sustained by the Aswan Dam can be turned into power serving not only to smelt this iron, but also to feed new factories in the Delta, and in due course provide Egypt with an industrial system as productive as her agriculture. This new wealth will make possible not only a higher standard of life for the fellaheen, but also the provision of those educational facilities without which, as Father Ayrout insists, there can be no real progress in the countryside. The sympathy and goodwill towards the fellaheen which a section of the educated classes in Egypt is already beginning to show will then have wider scope and greater effect. Such changes need not destroy, though they may modify, the organic relationship between the fellah and the soil which Father Ayrout values so much.

It often happens that a whole historical period is summed up in a book written at the moment when that period is

passing away. This is true of Lane's *Modern Egyptians* for ¹¹⁴
town-life in the Egyptian middle ages, and we may hope ¹²¹
that it will in some sense prove to be true, for the long-
unchanging life of the Egyptian countryside, of Father
Ayrout's *The Fellaheen*.

* * *

Besides revising the passage mentioned above, I have ¹²⁸
made some minor changes in the text or appendices, and
replaced some of the statistics given in the 1938 edition by
more recent figures. Once or twice I have been able to give
both pre-war and war-time prices, but the changes in supply
and demand during the war years have in any case divested
such figures of most of their meaning.

The author's notes have been translated and set at
the end of the book, together with a number of additional
notes which seemed necessary to clarify certain points.

In transliterating from Arabic to Roman characters,
I have tried to be as systematic as possible, but not to the
point of discarding spellings already well established in
English (e.g. fellaheen for *fellāhīn*), or varying the normal
forms of names and titles. However, since Lawrence pub-
lished his *Seven Pillars of Wisdom*, inconsistency in trans-
literation is perhaps not the heinous sin it was.

HILARY WAYMENT
London 1945

INTRODUCTION

ON UNDERSTANDING THE FELLAH

A country's peasantry is like the small particles in a sentence, or the strips of leading in a stained-glass window. It binds the nation together, gives it stability and character. It provides that humble but indispensable support on which both economic and social systems rely. By producing more than it consumes, the peasantry maintains society in health, and ensures a sound regularity to the state finances. 182

But the peasantry as a class is composed of separate individuals, of men. Enslaved as they may be to soil and seasons, long-suffering and slow, hide-bound and unprogressive as they appear to us, it is these people above all others who deserve the name of men. 365 182

Too long have we confused the producer with his product and the worker with the fruits of his labour. We have taken our fill of the harvest without a thought for the man who made it grow. We have failed to notice the distress which he himself could not put into words, and perhaps only half felt. And so today we are astonished at the reawakening of the peasantry, and realise with a shock of surprise what a dead weight of ignorance has been allowed to accumulate, both in official circles and in society at large, about the man of the soil. 114

By developing the themes of pastoralism and of natural beauty, and so confounding the peasant with his background, poets and artists of all ages, from Virgil to the present day, have conspired to draw a veil of illusion over the realities of country life. They have given us wonderful pictures, to be sure, but in so doing they have accustomed us to see in country life nothing but its picturesque and sentimental side, to find in an image the whole reality. The "sower's

||4 splendid gesture" has hidden from us the sower, the man himself.

This deformation is especially prevalent in the case of Egypt. In following year by year the books published on this subject in Paris alone, I have been particularly struck by it. French writers of the present day, continuing an established tradition, find Egypt a mine of interest. Between 1926 and 1937, for example, French publications on Egypt amounted to about forty novels and new travel books, not to mention a vast number of articles in newspapers and periodicals, appearing in France itself, as well as all the essays published in Egypt and elsewhere.

Now this vast mass of print, interesting as it is from many points of view, represents little more than an elegantly painted backcloth, a landscape with human figures superimposed. The fellah is never completely forgotten. He earns a few lines here, a page or two there. But he is always regarded superficially, from the outside. In any case he is not a very prominent character, and barely stands out from his background, the soil.

The result is that from such writings we shall learn a great deal about the prostitutes' quarters and the palaces of Cairo and Alexandria, something about the Pyramids, the museums and temples, the mosques and bazaars, rather less about economic and social affairs, and next to nothing about the man who is the very linch-pin of Egyptian society — the fellah.

Scientific writers about Egypt have been no less neglectful of the fellah than men of letters. The artist looks only at the landscape, the scientist at the land, while to both the peasant remains secondary. This criticism applies to the agriculturalists, the economists, and even the geographers, who have contributed so richly to our land knowledge of Egypt.

The works on agriculture by Audébeau and Mosséri, on irrigation by Willcocks and Barois, on the Nile by Prince Omar Toussoun, on landed property by Artin Pasha, Arminjon and Minost, on the geography of Egypt by Cerviller and Hug are indeed authoritative. They do not fail to mention the fellah, but only as a detail subordinate to their main preoccupations. He is considered only in relation to next page

nuring, harvesting or irrigation, land - ownership, taxation ||4/ or the yield per acre.

There seemed room, therefore, for a study of the fellah ||4/ himself which would show him first and foremost as a human ||21/ being, and consider all these other factors not as he influences them, but as they affect him. This change of perspective should make for a better understanding of Egypt as a whole.

But the land itself is nothing. Geography may have a place here, but it will be human geography : *homo additus naturae*. And man comes first. Such is human geography as Vidal de la Blache understood it ; a science including explanation as well as description, and bordering on psychology and sociology. So without ever separating the tiller of the soil from the earth which sustains and feeds him — for that would be a mutilation — we shall make him the focus of our study.

Our aim then is to portray the fellah's background and ||21/ the fellah in person ; to photograph the very life of these men who humanise the soil of Egypt and in their turn become almost a part of it ; and to attempt a description of the contacts which explain their character and personality.

To save time, a familiarity with the main facts of the history of Egypt and the outlines of its geography will be taken for granted. A number of excellent works on these subjects have recently been published.

Our enquiry is limited to the fellah in the strict sense of the term, that is to say the farm labourer and small farmer, and does not touch the small craftsmen or the boatmen on the Nile. These are also fellaheen in origin, but their specialisation has given them a different way of life, which deserves a separate study.

We shall speak of the past only when it is necessary, for we are concerned with the fellah as he is today. The present, as we shall soon see, includes the past.

The bibliography, which does not claim to be exhaustive, mentions only those works to which the author has referred for specific points. Egyptian books and periodicals have been preferred where possible, since even if they are not always sufficiently concise or scientific they see Egypt from within, and the information they give, while leaving room for critical discrimination, is at least first-hand.

121 At the same time the author's conclusions are based principally on personal observation over a period of years in various provinces of the Nile Valley. They are based, too, on personal intercourse with people of every rank, and on reflection upon things actually seen and heard.

Thus the work now laid before the public is the result of careful observation and study. This fact has made the writer all the more conscious of its deficiencies.

It is to be hoped, however, that this book will help to raise the question of the fellah in all its seriousness, and so encourage a deeper comprehension of this ancient country.

CHAPTER I

CHANGELESSNESS

The fellaheen (*), that is to say the country labourers of Egypt, whose life is the subject of the following chapters, represent something more than a mere class. As a uniform, autochthonous mass, which constitutes more than three quarters of the total population, they may rightly be called the people of Egypt.

This people, which produced the earliest civilisation, or at any rate a civilisation of great originality that has lasted for fifty centuries, shows exceptional powers of survival and persistence.

The fellaheen have changed their masters, their religion, their language and their crops, but not their manner of life. From the distant epochs of the Old Kingdom to the climax of the dynastic period the Egyptian people preserved and maintained itself. Under foreign domination, for years or centuries at a time, by Persians, Greeks, Romans, Byzantines, Arabs, Turks, French and English, it has remained unchangingly the same. Even today the fellaheen play practically no part in the Egyptian renaissance, or the movement for independence and progress.

They were at first pagans carrying totemism to the point of zoolatry, then for ten centuries Christians who reached the heights of asceticism and martyrdom. They made no difficulties about accepting Islam, and yet thirteen hundred years of Mohammedanism have done little to change their fundamental beliefs.

They are a receptive, yet resistant people; patient but unyielding. Although they have dwelt so long at the crossroads of international traffic, in a country which has been the scene of earth-shaking events, they remain as calm and unmoved as the depths of the sea beneath a storm.

- 175 The map of the world has been changed a hundred times, and with it the map of Egypt; but fundamentals have not changed and the fellahen have remained the same.

They have taken the strain of all these changes, and never flinched. Violent and repeated shocks have swept away whole peoples, as can be seen today from the ruins of North Africa or Chaldea, which stand deserted in lands peopled by an alien race. But the fellahen have held firm and stood their ground.

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669] The history of Egypt includes wars and revolutions in plenty, but the people have taken no part in them. Only at one period, between A.D. 725 and A.D. 830, is there any mention of risings in the countryside. Crushed by the taxation of their Arab conquerors, the fellahen abandoned the villages where they were born and settled elsewhere. These evasive movements became almost general, but the repression was so severe that the Copts decided upon open revolt. Six times they rose, but without unity of plan or action. Six times they were savagely put down. They are not of the stuff of which rebels are made. Moreover, even in these revolts the mass of the people remained unaffected.

- 175 They are as impervious and enduring as the granite
178 of their temples, and as slow to develop, once established, as this form of art proved to be. The glimpses of their daily life which we get from the wall paintings of Pharaonic tombs or from Coptic legend, from Arab historians or the "Description of Egypt" (*), from early English researchers or the travellers of our own day, seem to form a single sequence. We get the impression that all these scenes, though separated by so many centuries, only repeat and confirm one another.

- 105 This is not merely an impression. We can see the fellah
178 using the same implements—the plough, the *shadif*, the *saqia*, the winnowing-fork, the sickle and the straw basket; the same methods of treating the body—tattooing, circumcision, colouring with *kohl* and henna, plucking of hair; and many of the same marriage and funeral customs. Through the pages of Herodotus, Diodorus Siculus, Strabo, Maqrizi, Vansleb, Père Sicard and Volney we can recognise the same fellah. No revolution, no evolution.

Here lies the heart of the problem. How are we to explain this physical stability, this changelessness both mental and social, this enduring and extraordinary sameness in a people ? 178

The answer lies in the soil. The uniformity of Egyptian art is to be explained by its assimilation to the natural environment. The level ridges and steep cliffs on the edge of the Arabian and the Libyan deserts have produced the long, low, solid outline of the Pharaonic temples, as well as the regular cornice which finishes them. The papyrus, lotus, or reed which grew along the Nile were stylised in the pillars and capitals which we now call papyriform, lotiform, or proto-Doric. 178 121

For ages past an intimate bond, which successive masters of Egypt have used all their powers to draw even tighter, has existed in the Nile Valley, between nature and the human mind.

The fellah stands between the hammer and the anvil, between the soil and the masters of the soil. Yet by the very nature of his life he remains nearer to it than to them; and their hammer-blows beat him yet closer to the ground. This union is so real that the fellah's masters, who are also the owners of the soil, through owning the soil also own the fellah. Thus the fellaheen owe their astonishing uniformity and stability to their close association with an element no less uniform and stable, namely the soil of Egypt. There has grown up between these two a bond which is at once firm and elastic; a balanced and self-sufficient interdependence which no crisis or government can disturb. Here is, in the words of Sully-Prudhomme, "that stern, immemorial wedlock of a land and a people which have made each other". This unbroken contact of people and land has caused a perpetual interplay of action and reaction, of likeness and difference, which strengthens the indissoluble union of the two. On the one hand, we have nature, the physical environment in its broader sense, that is to say the climate and the sunshine and above all the water and loam of the Nile, its flora and its enveloping sands. On the other hand we have man, the social element, that is to say the fellah class, shut in no less by its habits than by its villages; dense, gregarious, but isolated and unorganised, closer to the soil, which it understands, than to the State, of which it knows nothing. 181

178 But we must at all costs avoid here even the appearance
121 of determinism. The fellah is no more the product of the
Egyptian countryside than the countryside is the product
of the fellah. There is no question here of inevitability, or
any determining influence. Man is free, and this freedom
is to be defined as "the power of self-determination".

241 Man is free, and cultivation remains contingent on his
249 will. There are infinite possibilities, among which the
will of man — not of the fellah, but of his master — chooses
this or that, according to circumstances. At one time, the
vine was grown on Egyptian soil. Grapes make wine, and the
veto of the Koran killed the vineyards. Not long ago, vast
areas were planted with tobacco, but the Government has
now forbidden this. Maize of American origin, and cotton,
introduced in the nineteenth century, are now chief among
the crops. Tomorrow some new crop may cover the fields.
No law of necessity, whether of climate or soil, determines
once and for all the agriculture of Egypt; much less, then,
human life. At the same time the climate and vegetation
of Egypt exert a characteristic influence on those who live
in, and on, the country.

181 In the case of the town-dwellers and industrial workers,
183 the bond between nature and man is looser; the impress
132 of the physical environment is softened and neutralised by the
133 stronger social, civic and political influences. This makes
121 these classes less stable, but more progressive.

The countryman, on the other hand, is moulded directly
by the soil. Febvre justly criticises the generalisations of
Ratzel and Brunhes on the influence of physical environ-
ment (*); but without granting their theories anything like
universal applicability we may recognise that they do apply
sufficiently to agricultural communities, and especially to
the Egyptian fellahen.

It will become clear, indeed, that the monotony, uni-
formity and productiveness of the Nile Valley have their
exact counterpart in the characteristics of the fellah
community. These two are not parallel but correlative.
They meet and crystallise in a distinct manner of life, which
is at once a geographical and a social phenomenon. It will
also become clear that the water and mud of the Nile enter
into and in great part explain the whole life of the fellah,
his work and his home, his body and his soul, and impart

to him both their qualities and their defects. It is because the fellah 'buries' himself in this mud that it has become so fertile. Egypt, gift of the Nile, is no less a gift of the fellah. It is because this soil has incarnated itself in the fellah that he himself is so enduring, but also so material, so stagnant.

Progress then must come from some form of release, of emergence, from education in the original sense of drawing out potentialities. The true duty of society is to liberate the fellah's spirit from its stifling envelope of mud; to free him from the defects of the soil, while leaving him its good qualities. The initiative can never come from his own community, which is completely numbed and powerless, but only from the classes which overshadow him, from the élite, who with their riches of mind and money can vitalise him. In this dough must work the leaven of intelligence and sympathy.

The following chapters will illustrate in detail these general remarks, and bring us by the logic of facts to the human conclusion which we have here outlined.

CHAPTER II

THE PHYSICAL BACKGROUND

EGYPT AN AGRICULTURAL COUNTRY

I. - Geography

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177 There has been much talk of the industrialisation of
565 Egypt. The progress of the last five years is as wide-
241 spread as it has been rapid. An industrial proletariat has
emerged, a native working class, which is worthy of study.
But the absence of iron and coal mines has prevented this
country from becoming, properly speaking, an industrial
centre, and even from being able to satisfy the needs of
its own population in manufactured goods. It is and will
be for some time to come primarily an agricultural country.
This results from its physical structure (*).

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133 By reason of its flat surface, its rich, damp loam, its
134 fertilising river, and its warm, dry climate, Egypt is geo-
graphically suited for wide and intensive cultivation, and
its soil can bear crop after crop without failing.

Were it not for the fertilising Nile, the one artery of life
which flows across this desert area of Africa, Egypt, like her
neighbours Arabia and Libya, would be little more than a
vast expanse of sand, granite, and limestone, in itself useless
for either agriculture or industry, — a poverty-stricken land
of nomads and shepherds.

Though the Nile has its source outside the land of
Egypt, it is to Egypt that its fullness belongs. It enters
her boundaries after a journey of 3,000 miles with a rich load
of silt drawn from the most varied types of soil. It renews
itself year after year, and its rise and fall is the pulse of
Egypt's life.

The silt, brought from the south and carried down on
the flood, has been deposited by the Nile in alluvial strata,

since the last phase of the quaternary period, over the flat edges of its bed, and spread out in ever widening layers across its mouth, encroaching on the sea (?).

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These deposits have created on top of the granite, limestone or sand a layer of black earth, varying in depth between 10 to 30 metres in different regions.

The Nile soil which thus covers the valley consists of both coarse and colloidal clay, with an admixture of various salts. It is an amalgam of finely ground particles carried down by the Blue and White Niles. The composition of this arable soil, unlike that of most agricultural countries, is substantially the same everywhere. It has a high mineral content, which, as we shall see later, has an important influence on the food of the fellah.

This soil, once deposited, is continually irrigated and enriched by the Nile, by means of either flooding or canalisation, but always under the control of man. The time-honoured system of basin irrigation, still in use over a million feddans, consists in discharging the water at flood-time through small channels on to *hóds* — vast areas of land surrounded by dykes. The land absorbs water until it is saturated; then the remainder slowly drains away, after depositing a layer of the fine silt with which the water was laden before flowing into the basins. Each feddan thus receives about 7,000 cubic metres of water, which leave 8 or 9 tons of silt. Immediately after the water is drained off (about November) the crops are sown. They are then left to ripen until harvest-time without needing any further irrigation. The land then lies fallow till the next flood. However, many of those who farm basin land, in order to produce a summer as well as a winter crop, make use of the underground water by means of pumps, which are now so common that they have modified the system of cultivation in these districts.

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The perennial system of irrigation, introduced in 1840, and made possible through engineering works, of which the most notable is the Aswan Dam, now covers all the Delta and the greater part of Upper Egypt (4,300,000 feddans). The Nile no longer completely floods the land. Its water is stored in reservoirs, then distributed through barrages into a network of canals which water the land throughout the year.

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241 Thus at High Nile (August to October) the fields are
132 no longer flooded, but only irrigated, and bear the crops called
nili. When the flood is over, and the level of the flood is
falling (November to April), the land, being still moist,
receives sufficient water for the winter crop (*shetwi*). At
Low Nile (April to July) the reservoirs are gradually emptied
to provide water for ripening a third crop, called the summer
crop (*safi*).

132 To be fruitful, the land needs not only water, but also
134 air. The sun, by the vertical cracks its summer heat makes
in the level soil, plays its part in reviving the fallow land.
It removes excess salt and mellows the soil by letting the
air penetrate deeply into the earth, so that the land is de-
hydrated and renewed (').

We thus see the Nile, helped by the sun, already at
work preparing and cultivating the land, and so determining
the fellah's physical environment, the living Egypt.

133 In fact, wherever the Nile does not penetrate, either
from above or below, the desert begins abruptly, without any
intermediate zone. The conventional colourings of maps,
which show Egypt as a thin green strip across a great
dun-coloured space, correspond exactly with reality. From
the top of the Great Pyramid near Cairo, or from the hills
of the Sa'id ('), one is struck, whichever way one looks,
by the clear line of demarcation where human labour and
habitation stop short. Between the cliffs of the Libyan and
Arabian deserts lies a level valley, 650 miles in length. Its
width is less than a mile at Wadi-Halfa ('), 3 miles at Edfu,
about 8 between Luxor and Assiut, where it narrows again,
and 15 at Beni-Suef, whence a branch goes off westward to
the Fayûm. From Cairo it spreads out fanwise to form a
coast-line of 160 miles at the north of the Delta. In all
there are some 12,000 square miles of good land, lying in
the midst of about 400,000 square miles of barren sand.
This 3% of the whole area represents the living and pro-
ductive Egypt.

Its shape is given to it by the Nile. It looks like a giant
lotus, whose roots, the White and the Blue Nile, are planted
in the heart of Africa, in the high mountains of Abyssinia
and the great lakes of the Congo. From Khartoum the sap
rises along a single stem, which pushes into Egypt at Wadi-
Halfa, shows signs of green at Aswan, bears a single leaf

(the Fayûm) near Beni-Suef, flowers at Cairo, and spreads out into a great head of blossom on the Rosetta and Damietta branches, till it touches the Mediterranean across a fringe of lakes — Mariut, Edku, Borollos and Manzala — stretching from West to East across the mouths of the river. 133

Closed in by its two deserts, far across which lie the political frontiers, the Nile Valley is of an essentially agricultural nature. Its life has but one colour, the green of perpetual crops. They spread over a vast, unvarying countryside, sprinkled here and there with towns and villages. 137

A man standing in a maize field at harvest time can see neither the Nile, nor the vast network of canals and drains, nor the low clusters of houses, and is able to trace the railway line only by the telegraph poles. As on the well-watered plains of Holland and Russia — though under a rainless sky — the fields and crops are all in all. 133 241

A traveller in the Valley of the Nile cannot fail to be impressed by the agricultural nature of the whole countryside. Whether he goes north from Cairo to Alexandria, or south towards Khartoum, whether he travels by rail, road or river, in the Delta or in the Sa'id, in summer or in winter, his impression will be the same. But once he leaves the Nile on the way to Suez, or to the Coptic monasteries of Wadi-Natroun, the desert engulfs him on every side. He seems in a different country. On the West he will find the oases of Kharga, Dakhla, Farafra and Siwa, with their Bedouin and their bazaars. On the East, towards the Red Sea coast, he will meet with oil-wells and phosphate mines, and the families of Upper Egyptian fellaheen who have gone to work there. In this strange, denuded Egypt, which is neither Upper nor Lower Egypt, there are only these uprooted exiles to remind the traveller of the familiar countryside which for him, as for nine tenths of the Egyptians themselves, is the land of Egypt. 166 464

2. — Ethnology.

Neither the water nor the silt of the Nile, however, nor the burning rays of the sun could have created, maintained until today, the agricultural land of Egypt, without the aid of a population itself fundamentally agricultural. 162 241

Here is a clear instance of correspondence between human concentration and physical productivity. Here, more than anywhere else, irrigation and population are co-extensive.

The number of inhabitants must have varied in the course of earlier ages, but definite figures will never be known. However, prehistoric discoveries give early indications of density (*). In the Pharaonic period the population probably fluctuated between seven millions, the figure given by Diodorus Siculus⁽¹⁰⁾, and ten millions. The writers of Christian Egypt speak of twenty millions. At the time of the French expedition, after centuries of Arab and Turkish rule, the figure fell to some two and a half millions. Jomard, basing his estimate on the number of villages and the level of production, thinks such a figure quite normal.

Later statistics were to show, however, that it was remarkably low. An equilibrium which had been destroyed by factors other than those of geography — massacres, plague and famine⁽¹¹⁾ — was not long in re-establishing itself. As Vidal de la Blache justly remarks about Egypt, 'ancient civilisations derive a remarkable elasticity from the fact that they are based on what changes least, the productive and recuperative quality of the soil.'

In point of fact, once order and public security were re-established, the progressive introduction of perennial irrigation and of exportable crops, by developing the possibilities of the land, necessitated a constantly growing labour force and brought about an increase of population.

The first detailed census, in 1873, showed 5,250,000 inhabitants. Half a century later, in 1927, the number had risen to 14,217,864. In 1937 it stood at 15,904,525. This population remains closely packed on the black soil upon which it depends. Ninety-three per cent. of the Egyptians, that is to say more than fifteen million souls, dwell in the basin of the Nile, which represents only a thirtieth of the whole territory. In this narrow area the towns, overcrowded and few in number, contain scarcely more than three million inhabitants. The rest of the Egyptians are countryfolk, and almost all workers on the land, fellahen. According to official records 62% of the men of the country work in the fields. Adding to these the women and children, who must everywhere be taken into account as active workers,

3: Ayrout M-5 (ca. 1935) 1945

MR13 Fellahin MR13

Egypt MR1

we shall probably be rather under- than overstating the case if we reckon the agricultural population, which is the subject of our enquiries, at twelve million souls.

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Moreover, this population is increasing. Less rapidly, it is true, than that of Cairo, where between 1917 and 1927 the increase was 28%, while in the country it scarcely exceeded 10%. But in the city the rise is largely due to an influx from abroad and from the countryside; in the country it is dependent on the birthrate alone.

Thus the rural density of population is about 1300 persons to the square mile ("). Such a situation is probably without parallel except in Tonkin, where six million peasants live on 5150 square miles, giving a density of 1165, or 93% of the population on 16% of the territory. Of this mass three millions live at a density of 1400, and more than one and a half millions at 2800 (").

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The density of population in the Nile Valley is explained by the concurrence of all the conditions, geographic, economic and social, which favour a high birthrate. The climate is warm, the valley itself is flat, uniform, tractable and strictly defined. There are plentiful food crops which can provide locally for a numerous population; maize, corn, rice, lentils and beans grow throughout the country.

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The cultivation of cotton necessitates a settled concentration of workers, whose labour may bring considerable profit. The perennial irrigation system on the one hand requires many labourers, and on the other hand, by raising the productivity of the soil, makes it possible for more people to live on it. The soil is divided into many small properties, either rented or privately owned. These small holdings only accentuate the overcrowding which causes them. Help is wanted as cheap as possible; children can provide it. Thus the fellah is forced by the exigencies of the land to have children, and as many as possible. This for him is the meaning of marriage and the family. Where all these conditions exist together, as in the province of Menoufiya in the Upper Delta, where the land has been longest cultivated and irrigated, where cotton is the chief crop and small holdings are the most numerous, a density of over 2,000 to the square mile is to be found (").

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Where favourable conditions are fewer the density grows less. This is so in the South, in the districts above

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162 and below the cataract of Aswan, where the land is less rich
 134 and is still under the system of basin irrigation and large, semi-feudal estates. In the province of Aswan there are only 305,195 inhabitants to 224,000 feddans. This gives about 800 to the square mile. But the lowest rural density occurs in the lake region of the North, where the lands are low-lying, salt and marshy. Near Kafr-el-Dawâr, not far from Alexandria, it is only about 500 to the square mile.

311 This uneven distribution, though it may be explained
 162 by physical conditions, is not finally determined by them. In the outlying districts which we have just mentioned the full capacity of the land is far from being reached.

181 There is still another factor of prime importance to
 166 be considered — habit. Time as well as place has its influence
 464 on human psychology. The fellah has a stable, unadventurous disposition. He stays tied to his native village, which represents for him the security of both past and present. Unlike the Palestinian or Syrian peasant, he never emigrates to try his luck. He will never even take a job in another province where there is a demand for labour, unless he is pressed into it by force. If he does leave his native *balad*, it will not be for another country district, which could never be as good as his own, or afford him a better life or income; he will make for the town, and by preference for Cairo. So migration is comparatively rare, and owners of newly reclaimed land (*barâri*) find great difficulty in securing sufficient hands, despite the good pay and housing they offer.

Rural, gregarious, stay-at-home; such is the Egyptian people in its dominant characteristics. These qualities have contributed as much as the needs and possibilities of the soil to cause the over-population of the country.

162 Over-population, however, is a relative term, and there are a number of factors to be taken into account.

312 The adoption of perennial irrigation has made possible
 241 a more intensive exploitation of the most fertile land. Thus the area actually cultivated remained more or less stable between 1930 and 1940 at an average of 5,353,500 feddans; however, since much of this land produced two crops in the course of a year, the crop area, as it is called, rose to close on eight and a half million feddans.

At the same time the use of chemical fertilisers and the improvement of the drainage system raised the average yield per feddan. Between 1932 and 1939 the yield of all crops showed a distinct tendency to rise, only to fall again sharply in 1941, after imports of fertilisers had been drastically cut down.

Again, although the area actually cultivated averaged only 5,353,500 feddans between 1930 and 1940, there are in all 7,100,000 feddans which are classed as cultivable. The surplus of 1,750,000 feddans consists largely, no doubt, of inferior land, but if energetic measures were taken a great deal of it could be worked economically. Even should the limit be reached there still remains the Sudan. This vast and under-populated country is really an extension of Upper Egypt, which it resembles.

If present trends continue, however, these favourable factors are likely soon to be neutralised by the constant increase of the fellah population. Although the birthrate shows a tendency to fall, the gross rate of increase rose from an average of 168,000 a year between 1927 and 1937 to about 250,000 a year between 1937 and 1941.

Year	Population	Increase	Percentage Increase	Mean Annual Percentage Increase
1897	9,714,525	2,910,504	—	—
1907	11,287,359	1,572,834	16.2	1.62
1917	12,750,918	1,463,559	13.0	1.3
1927	14,217,864	1,466,946	11.5	1.25
1937	15,932,694	1,714,830	12.1	1.21

It is clear that sooner or later, if the present standard of living of the fellaheen is to be maintained, let alone raised, the problem of over-population will become acute. The pal- liatives we have mentioned will not suffice for long. More drastic measures will have to be taken: on the one hand the industrialisation of the country, to create a better balance between industry and agriculture and to raise the general level of production; and on the other hand a policy of re-allotment of land, permitting more intensive cultivation by smallholders, and better distribution of the products. The consideration of such remedies, however, lies beyond the scope of this book.

(2) The aim of this chapter was not to re-formulate the geography and ethnography of Egypt; for that it would need to be considerably amplified, and illustrated with maps. It was meant to reveal the interdependence of land and people, and so lead to the study of the men who make the land what it is, and are to some extent moulded by it themselves — the fellaheen.

CHAPTER III

THE SOCIAL AND POLITICAL BACKGROUND EGYPT AN OLIGARCHY

In Egyptian politics and society the peasantry has always constituted the primal mass, and as it were the raw material; the foundation, almost the sub-soil, on which government and society are based. This double structure must now be considered before we can look more closely at the fellah's way of life.

The façade of contemporary Egypt, modern and composite in style, is represented by the country's three great cities with their striking, many-sided activity. There is Cairo, with its two universities (having nearly 20,000 students), its palaces and museums, its scientific institutions, its international congresses and winter lecture-courses. There is Alexandria, with its busy port and Cotton Exchange, its foreign institutions, its fashionable beaches and esplanade. There is Port Said, gateway to the East, with the Suez Canal and all its traffic. These cities compose a sort of triptych, in which large and varied groups standing side by side conceal the fundamental Egypt, just as the stones of a mosaic hide the grey cement which supports them.

Just as it was once usual to speak of 'All the Russias', so today, from a social point of view, one might well talk of Egypt in the plural. There is no single Egyptian people, in the usual literary or historical sense of this word, but only a seething assemblage of the most varied types, which has no real correspondence with the country itself. Neither is there a true peasant community, but only a homogeneous mass of peasants bound to the soil and isolated in their villages.

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369 In a diversity so inorganic the various groups meet or overlap without real relationship or interpenetration, without even real knowledge of one another. The townspeople of Cairo and Alexandria know the countryside only by glimpses caught through a train or car window. The fellahen, shut in by their fields and villages, know nothing of the city except through the 'omda, the Greek grocer, or the landlord's agent.

Even in Cairo or Alexandria, where the aristocracy of Egypt is gathered together, the various groups only touch at their edges. Each lives in its own way, and is self-sufficient. Each has its own mentality, and its own 'Egypt'.

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369 On the one hand there are the Egyptian groups. These may be either Copts or Moslems. The sphere of the great landowners is not the same as that of Government officials. The clerical milieu of Al-Azhar is worlds away from the lay society of the Egyptian University. At receptions and festivities there are still only men present. Women have their own distinct groups. There is also the Palace, and the separate circle of the Princes.

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563 Then there are the foreign communities. These are certainly Egyptianised to some extent, but this is their only point in common. Each has its own clearly defined characteristics. The Syrians are active business men. The Jews are influential financiers. The English keep their distance at the Turf Club. The French and Belgians are concerned with the big companies — the Gas, and Water Companies, the *Crédit Foncier* ("), the Sugar Refineries, the Suez Canal — and the Italians are in building and commerce. The Greeks, who are more numerous, come closer to the masses of the people.

All these, which are essentially urban groups with their own characteristics and their own capital, act as a kind of leaven in the economy, finance and politics of Egypt. They are not a leaven to its people, for they never even mix with Egyptian society, and their progress leaves the fellahen unmoved. Only from the outside and at a distance, through numerous intermediaries, do they knead the masses and take from them what they have to give.

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421 The source of Egypt's wealth is the soil, and what it yields to the fellah's labours. But we must examine first of all the ownership of this soil. The whole structure of an agricultural country is built on its law of property.

3: Ayrout M-5 (ca. 1935) 1945

MR13 Fellahin MR13

Egypt MR1
Turkish Egypt MR2

In Egypt the productive area of about 11,000 square miles, representing a value of L.E. 435,000,000, is divided into State Lands (*miri*), entailed estates (*wakfs*) and private property (*milk*).

The State and the Land

In 1813 Mohammed Aly, the founder of Modern Egypt (1769-1849), after seizing the possessions of the Mamelukes, divided their lands into village districts and distributed them to the villagers. Each cultivator thus obtained from three to five feddans in usufruct. Until 1840 he was subject to the system of monopoly. He had to deliver all his cotton to the Government depot at an official figure lower than the market price. On grain, which he was allowed to sell in the free market, he had to pay a tax of 18 piastres an *ardeb*. According to Moslem law the Sovereign — formerly the Sultan, Commander of the Faithful, but now his emancipated Viceroy — remained sole owner, in God's name, of all conquered land. However, estates conferred by former Sultans on private individuals, or granted to tax-payer farmers, and also *wakf* property, remained outside his control. Moreover, vast areas still uncultivated were excluded from the survey, exempt (until 1858) from taxation, and allotted with full rights of ownership to notables, high officials, or members of the ruling house, who were in a position to bring them under cultivation. This is the origin of the large estates.

Small property came into being by a slow process which began with the subdivision of the land. In 1846 a fellah enjoying the usufruct of a plot was authorised with it by title-deed, while still retaining without question his right to re-acquire it. In the same way, after eviction for arrears of taxes, if later he could pay off the debt he could take back his field. Later on the children of the usufructuary were allowed to take over their fathers' fields; but this was only by Government concession, not by right of inheritance.

In 1871 Ismail Pasha, hard pressed by debt, offered full ownership of their plots to all tenants who would pay six years' taxes in advance. This law met with only partial success, and was repealed in 1880. But the principle of fellah ownership was established; and the Government con-

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423 firmed it by selling plots of State land to small farmers year
by year.

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651 At the same time the rate and the method of taxation
661 remained arbitrary, and the whole system had become
thoroughly corrupt. The High Commission of Enquiry
into Property Taxation (1878-1880) discovered widespread
abuses in every province. Agricultural production was
suffering, and some form of equalisation was becoming an
urgent necessity. But first of all a new survey had to be
carried out, more scientific than that of Mohammed Aly,
which was too legalistic in its distinctions.

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659 In 1892 the Survey Department, under the direction of
423 English engineers, undertook the immense task of demarca-
661 tion. After due consideration of roads, canals, and natural
boundaries, the land of each village area, called *zimam*,
consisting on an average of 2,000 feddans, was divided into
sections (*hóds*) of 50 to 100 feddans of equal value and quality
(with a variation of no more than 50%) and marked off by
iron boundary-pegs. The cadastral plan of the village was
drawn to a scale of 1: 25,000 for all agricultural areas,
then plot by plot on a scale of 1: 2,500. It defined every
hód with its serial number and taxable value. The village
site was shown as a single area and exempted from taxation.
The survey register annexed to the plan gave for each plot
in the *hód* its position, its area in feddans and kirats, the
exact tax and the owner's name (").

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651 The work was completed in 1907, but in 1899 the Govern-
134 ment already had sufficient data to establish a general
rate of taxation, which was fixed at 28.64% of the revenue
from the land, determined by its mean rentable value. The
scale was fixed for 30 years.

This average, based on the estimates of Egyptian
committees, takes into account the nature of the soil, its
content of salt, sand and water, its distance from the Nile,
and still more such factors of human geography as facility or
difficulty of irrigation, the level of cotton production, proximity
to town or village, the length of time for which it has been
under cultivation, the availability of labour, communications
and police, the balance of supply and demand; in a word,
the factors which make the price of a feddan vary between
L.E. 40 and L.E. 180. Twenty-two different categories of
land have thus been established, and the rate of taxation,

based on the same scale of value, varies between 14 and 164 piastres.

Law No. 113, of 1939, fixed the new tax at 16% of the rentable value of the land, according to estimates made throughout the country by special commissions, and based on the average rentals for the previous ten years. However, as before, the maximum tax cannot exceed 164 piastres per feddan.

There was no change in the date-palm tax, which until 1920 stood at 21 piastres per tree, with a five-yearly census; or in the irrigation tax, viz 50 piastres per feddan where *séfi* irrigation could be carried out by natural means (free flow), and 30 piastres for land to which the water had to be raised by mechanical means (lift flow).

Rebates are provided for when crops have deteriorated owing to lack of water, or where irrigation would have been unduly expensive. The tax is payable by the owner alone.

The date of payment, as well as the rate, is fixed beforehand. It varies for each province, according to the times of the main harvests, and payments are made by instalments, so that at the end of the year the whole amount due for the 24 kirats composing each feddan is paid up. For example in Qalioubiya two parts are payable in January, three in March, three in April, eight in October and eight in November.

The tax is collected at the owner's house by a *sarraf*, and the demand note (*wird*), when countersigned, serves as a receipt. If, as often happens, payments are in arrears, the Government obtains payment by distraint and forced sale. For example, to take the *Journal Officiel* for January 1937 only, there are 732 seizures listed, almost all of quite small holdings. These seizures are always advertised in the same terms:

'January 19, 1937. 3 kirats belonging to Imam Imam Ibrahim, situated in the village of Kafr Mansour, Toukh Markaz, in Medawwar *kôd* No. 4, Lot 19, seized according to *procès-verbal* of March 2, 1936, in payment of arrears. Price L.E. 9.600 for the portion seized.'

The Government shows more patience with big land-owners. 'It is not just', a *sarraf* once admitted to me. In practice there may be injustice, but the rate of taxation is quite just, and except in times of crisis not unduly high.

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651 It merely presupposes a taxpayer whose financial arrangements are never unsound, and a yield with no great variation.

If then we add to the property tax (about L.E. 5,500,000) the excise from the sale of cotton and the revenue from State domains, the land provides the Government with about L.E. 10,000,000 a year, which represents about a quarter of budget receipts.

The State is also the chief landowner in Egypt. Apart from the estates included in Mohammed Aly's survey, but not bought by the fellaheen, the State acquired in 1878 the property of the Khedivial family, to pay off a part of the vast debts of Ismail Pasha, and has also enlarged its domains by reclaiming new areas in the region of the lakes and on the edges of the desert.

So out of an agricultural area of 7,000,000 feddans the State still holds one fifth, or 1,470,305. It cultivates directly 418,778 feddans, situated mostly in Lower Egypt. This immense untaxed property is in part mortgaged as security for the National Debt, and in part unproductive.

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464 Every year, however, the Government brings under cultivation some 8,000 feddans of land formerly too marshy or too dry, and sells off the greater part of it in small lots to private owners. The State domains give work and a livelihood to about two million fellaheen, as either labourers or tenants. Another million work on land which they will never be able to own.

Wakf Lands

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429 Since the Moslem conquest many landowners have laid all or part of their estates under a sort of entail (*wakf*) (""). This they have done partly for religious motives, but also in order to put their wealth out of the reach of confiscation by princes or dissipation by their heirs. This means that by a kind of religious dedication or donation to God they render their properties perpetually inalienable in law. There are two kinds of *wakf*. The revenues of *wakf khairi*, or charitable trusts, are consigned to mosques, schools, cemeteries, homes or other pious foundations. *Wakfs ahli*, on the other hand, are earmarked for the founder's descendants until the family dies out, when they revert to some religious purpose.

God being thus the sole owner, the beneficiaries of ^E ^F ⁴²³
⁷⁹⁴ ⁴²⁹
 wakf lands enjoy their revenues, but cannot realise them. The Christians of the Oriental Churches have also followed this method of dealing with property, and today more than 610,000 feddans, or about a sixth of the cultivated area, are thus withdrawn from the market.

A Ministry of Wakfs has the task of administering these ancient Moslem bequests, and ensuring the fulfilment of the founders' wishes. But it is clear that these properties in mortmain, with no human landowner, are the least productive. However, for this very reason, owing to the lack of ^F ^[461] interest on the part of managers and agents, who are liberally paid out of whatever profits they make, the fellaheen on wakf lands have a fairly easy life.

Private Property

Official publications take a pride in pointing out that ^F ⁴²³
 Egypt is a country of small landowners, and quote recent statistics in support of their claim. It is true that a million and a half fellaheen each own an average of a third of a feddán. Half a million more own from one to five feddans each, and about 150,000 own from 5 to 50 feddans. But these small farmers together do not possess more than half the cultivated land. In 40 years the area held by smallholders has increased by 850,000 feddans or 83%, while the number of the smallholders themselves has increased by 355% ⁽¹⁸⁾. Thus, while on the one hand two and a quarter million fellaheen own less than two million feddans, on the other hand more than two million feddans are in the hands of only 12,559 landowners. Of these, twenty-three Egyptians and twenty-five foreigners own among them some three hundred thousand feddans.

The greatest landowner in the country is the King. ^E ^F ⁴²³ ⁶⁴³
 The late King Fuad I, who at his accession in 1917 owned eight hundred feddans, had acquired twenty-eight thousand feddans by the time of his death in 1936. This figure does not include the revenues from forty-five thousand feddans of wakf land entrusted to his supervision. The estates of limited companies amount to a hundred and fifty thousand feddans. Egypt is still in reality a country of large landowners.

423 The great estates lie chiefly in Upper Egypt and in the
 427 newly reclaimed areas of the Delta. They do not always
 remain under the same ownership, and certain estates have
 changed hands six times in twenty years, without, however,
 any variation in their methods of working.

The great landowners run their estates indirectly by the
 help of their *daira* and of *ndzirs* in the same way as companies
 such as the Kom Ombo Sugar Factories, banks such as the
Crédit Foncier and the Land Bank, the large *wakfs* and the
 State Domains.

The *daira* is the town office for administration and
 accountancy. It makes orders and purchases, arranges
 advances and sales and pays the taxes.

The *ndzir*, a bailiff or agent, is the owner's representa-
 tive on the estate and is the real executive, on whom the
 whole system depends for its working. He is as obsequious
 to his master as he is stern to the fellaheen. His business
 is to exert all possible pressure on the agricultural machinery,
 that is, the fellaheen, in order to increase the output. He
 is like a saw that cuts both ways, as his victims put it. He
 controls the ploughing, manuring, sowing and harvesting
 by a rule-of-thumb routine. However, landowners would
 rather rely on his experience than employ agricultural en-
 gineers, who are not yet taking the part for which they are
 qualified in Egyptian rural affairs.

[643] On the State Domains and the estates of the King and
 Princes the management is more varied. The different
 services are grouped in a *tefteesh* or inspectorate, and installed
 in an *ezba*.

361 The *ezba* is an inseparable part of the larger estates.
 656 It is a homestead for the estate workers, separated from the
 village, and constituting a hamlet which belongs entirely to
 the estate owner. This arrangement, which is less than a
 century old, was legally established in 1913, and modified
 slightly in 1933.

"No *ezba* may be established on any estate without the
 consent of the Provincial Council, which should take into
 consideration the extent of the petitioner's estate, its distance
 from the village, and the number of farm labourers to be
 housed there." For the law is still valid which forbids "the
 building, by whosoever it may be, of any manner of dwell-
 ing upon cultivated land outside the recognised village area".

There are today more than fifteen thousand *ezbas*. Their importance and the number of their inhabitants are proportionate to the area of the estate. Some have grown into full-sized villages, but most of them depend, administratively, on the village from which they sprang. 361

Not only the houses on an *ezba*, but all the implements and machinery, too, whether ancient, like the *sagia* and the *norag*, or modern, like the pumping-engine and the threshing-machine, together with the store-houses and, more often than not, the animals, belong to the owner of the estate. If he cultivates it directly, the fellaheen are day-labourers; if not, they are usually tenants or share-croppers. In either case they are in a sense bound to the soil, and remain so in spite of changes of ownership, unless evicted for some other reason. 361 422 427

It may be that the owner has mortgaged his land. About a million feddans are thus burdened. If he cannot pay the interest, the bank forecloses. In 1935 fifty thousand feddans were thus expropriated because of debt. 427 423 425

It often happens that the holdings of the fellaheen are seized at the same moment. But who is there to discriminate? They may already have paid the Bey or the Pasha their dues, and are in no way responsible for his debts; but that is no concern of the creditors, who needs must foreclose on the mortgage.

One of the large banks had seized an *ezba* belonging to a notable of the region of Shoubra Ris, in the Markaz of Kafr-el-Zayyât. A number of lots on this *ezba* had been let out to villagers, many of whom had been living on them for upwards of twenty years. When the bank's bailiff arrived to carry out the seizure, the villagers resisted him, and the police had to interfere. The assistant chief constable of the markaz arrived on the scene at the head of an armed force, but was attacked by the people. Seeing that the situation promised to grow more serious, he felt himself obliged to order shots to be fired in the air to frighten the fellaheen. The effect was to exasperate them. They proceeded to cut the telephone wires and burn the bailiff's car. A new body of police soon came to the rescue, but proved as useless as the first. Finally the Mudeer appeared on the scene at the head of yet a third force and order was re-established only when fur- 427 625 579 423

427 ther shots had been fired into the air. Seven of the policemen
625 were wounded by stones thrown at them by the villagers.
579 Several villagers were arrested, and a judicial enquiry was
423 opened. This incident, which took place in 1932, is by no
means abnormal. As is usual on such occasions, the land-
owner himself was absent.

423 The big landowner, even if he be of fellah origin — and
427 the proportion of land owned by native Egyptians is
369 ever on the increase — takes no interest in his estate
except as a source of income. Like the absentee land
lords of Irish history, or the pluralist rectors of seven-
teenth-century England, he goes as seldom, and stays
as short a time, as possible. He knows his labourers only
by the cash which his *ndzir* sends him; their families he
does not know at all. Of their lives and needs as human
beings and members of society he is sublimely ignorant. For
the big landowner is Europeanised. He lives in Cairo or
Alexandria and spends the summer in Europe. Everyone
knows how prodigal he is of his wealth, the wealth of Egypt.
In one evening he will fling away enough to keep his fellaheen
alive for a whole year. Their poverty and his own luxury
seem equally natural to him.

565 Between his men and himself there is no sort of bond.
643 He has no traditions linking him to this or that village. In
Egypt today there is no landed aristocracy, only an aristo-
cracy of wealth; and wealth gravitates to the town.

It is related that on one of his visits to the country the
late King Fuad stopped to witness the songs and dances
which a few fellaheen had improvised for him by the wayside.
A courtly minister was astonished at this condescension and
said:

'What generosity, Your Majesty, to waste ten minutes
like this!'

'But for these fellaheen, Your Excellency,' replied the
King, 'you would not have an income of five thousand
pounds, nor be either a minister or a pasha.'

565 Contempt for the fellah has become so deep rooted in the
369 minds of his 'superiors' that the very word has become the
worst of insults. Call anyone 'fellah', and it is as if you
had said 'lout', 'scum', or even worse. Among the rich there
is often complete indifference to the fellaheen. For them

the fellahen are mere 'creatures', in which there is no point in interesting oneself, and which it is considered good form to know nothing about. Faced with the simplest of queries about them, the rich often show an ignorance which makes it quite clear that such questions have never occurred to them, and arouse no curiosity. Even the best of them, while deploring the dullness and hidebound habits of the fellah, will do nothing to help him that might lessen their own income. All this maintains the gulf between the two extremes.

There is, however, a country middle class, consisting of medium landowners. Like the smallholders, they are closely attached to the village. Conservative, gain-loving and unpretentious, they live in the country and keep a close watch on the yield of their feddans. At feasts and funerals they give generously to their poor neighbours. From this class are drawn the pupils who fill the primary and secondary schools in the provinces, the students of the religious institutes dependent on Al-Azhar, the Government employees, and a number of police officers. It has produced the great men of contemporary Egypt, such as Sheikh Mohammed Abdou, Saad Zaghloul Pasha, Nahas Pasha, and Dr Taha Hussein.

These patriarchal families are, however, becoming fewer and fewer. One reason is the growth of their wealth and ambition. The second generation makes its way into the higher levels, and settles in Cairo or Alexandria. This exodus from the fields was largely encouraged by the boom of 1919-20, but apart from this the westernised education of the young and the taste for European things have produced a distaste for country life. Cairo and Alexandria, during the last fifteen years, have developed considerably in size and in amenities. Every year there is a new influx of wealthy provincials from the chief towns and villages in all the mudiriyas. Villas and blocks of flats spring up everywhere and luxury shops do a thriving trade.

A second reason for the decay of this middle class is the splitting up of estates by inheritance, for families are large. According to Moslem Law, which is universally applicable, the sons receive two parts each to the daughter's one. It is by no means unusual to find the grandson of a man who had 40 feddans inheriting no more than one, so that he falls back to the level of the fellahen.

423 Small properties do not result solely from the sub-
 425 division of inheritances, but also from the acquisition of
 426 tiny plots as money becomes available. The fellah is so
 hungry for land that he buys it, more often than not, at
 a ruinous price; this is also partly because he buys only a
 few *kirats* at a time. In order to pay for it he supplements
 his savings by contracting a debt.

423 The demand is so high that the lots are sold for the best
 425 price offered, and, in forced sales, by auction. Here is
 426 an example of what may happen. Ten feddans are on sale for
 556 L.E. 400. A dozen fellaheen join together to buy them at
 that price, and divide them up among themselves. But
 a rich landowner of the neighbourhood gets wind of the
 business. He arrives a few hours before the sale and sits
 down at a café in full view of everybody. He boasts openly
 that he is ready to buy the lot at no matter what price.
 The fellaheen, threatened with disappointment, come up
 and beg him to withdraw, offering money as compensation.
 He lets them plead, bargains with them, then pockets his
 gains and leaves the village, in high glee at the success
 of his stratagem, which he will repeat when opportunity
 offers. The fellaheen, who have given him L.E. 10 for
 nothing, think the bargain good.

The Government

656 The Government, by its control of the land, and still
 [312] more of the water, is supreme over capital and labour, and
 over the peasant class. As master of the irrigation system,
 it assumes for the fellah all the power and importance of the
 Nile. The more the State regulates the river, the greater
 the dependence on it of both soil and men of the soil.

As Egypt is an agricultural country, almost every Govern-
 ment organisation is, in the long run, giving orders to the
 fellah. In industry and in the large towns, the Govern-
 ment willingly entrusts the public services to private enter-
 prise. In agricultural matters, on the contrary, it assumes
 many functions which in other countries are undertaken by
 private persons. So much so that for the rural population
 the Government is a kind of overriding providence, while
 the fellah is regarded by the Government as a helpless child,
 who has constantly to be ordered about and protected from
 his own ignorance.

The Ministry of Public Works controls the irrigation of ⁶⁵⁶ all cultivated land, settles the rotation of crops for each zone, watches over the embankments and canals, and, if the Nile threatens to break its banks, recruits the fellaheen necessary for their maintenance.

The Ministry of Agriculture regulates the acreage of cotton and rice, distributes and controls the selection of cotton seed, and levies the fellaheen needed to fight the boll worm or the locust.

The Ministry of Finance collects the land-tax through ⁶⁵¹ its *sarrafs* in each district, issues orders for seizures, buys ⁶⁵⁶ cotton to maintain equilibrium in the home market, and ⁶⁵⁷ by means of the *Crédit Agricole* attempts to systematise the finances of the fellah.

The Ministries of Education and Public Health oblige ⁸⁷¹ the fellah to improve his mind and his physique.

The Ministry of Justice, through the district courts, ⁶⁹² — and after agelong delays — condemns or acquits him.

The Ministry of National Defence arranges for his en-⁷⁰² interest, or collects the exemption fine.

The Ministry of the Interior, acting in the common ⁶⁵⁶ interest, supports all this network of regulations and so ensures order and public security.

The Government system in its present form is less than ¹⁷⁵ a century old. It was established by Mohammed Aly, and has changed little in its working since. He did not ⁶⁴ so much create the machinery which deals with the fellah as systematise it after the disastrous and arbitrary rule of the Turks and Mamelukes. The founder of the reigning House thus raised over the heads of the fellaheen a system of law and order which makes it possible for them, if not to progress, at least to live.

Let us examine this hierarchy from top to bottom, and consider the relations of each authority with the fellah.

First of all comes the King. The last two sovereigns ⁴⁴³ (not to mention others) have sincerely desired the well-being ⁶⁴⁵ of the fellah, and frequently given proof of this desire. Their Ministers, however, are often more occupied with politics than with government, and travel far more in Europe than in the

643 country As in all modern Governments, they are always
645 changing, and their efforts are nullified by their successors.
Nevertheless, since government is extremely centralised,
their signatures are needed for the merest details, which
accounts for a great deal of delay. As they know the state of
affairs only from official reports, their decisions in matters
concerning the fellaheen are often either unsuitable or
inopportune.

647 The authorities whose business it is to apply these de-
692 cisions are legion. The transmission and execution of laws,
orders, decrees, bye-laws and the like is carried out by an
army of officials 200,000 strong, who for so doing absorb
a third of the revenue of the State, a sum almost equal to
what is furnished by the labours of the fellaheen.

647 This is no chance comparison of the author's. 'The
511 long continuance of the bureaucratic system,' said Makram
661 Ebeid Pasha, Minister of Finance, in presenting the budget
for 1938 to Parliament, 'has been the chief cause of the
lasting poverty of the fellah, in spite of the progress and prosper-
ity of the country.' He proposed, in his own words, to 'put
an end to this shameful state of affairs, which has turned the
people into mere servants of a government machine which
was intended to serve them.'

647 The overpowering weight of this machine is concentrat-
ed, for the fellah, in the hands of his *mudîr*, his *maamûr*,
and his *omda*. Let us examine the scope and function of
these different officials.

635 Politically, Egypt is divided into 23 sections. There
are five urban areas, called governorates (*mohâfazat*). These
are: Cairo, Alexandria, Port Said, Suez and the Canal Area.
There are four frontier-districts: the Red Sea, Sinai, the
Western Desert (including the Oases of Siwa, Bahariya
and Farafra) and the Southern Desert (including the Oases
of Dakhla and Kharga). Last, but not least, there are 14
agricultural provinces, called *mudiriya*s, which cover the
rest of the country.

Six of these—Beheira, Gharbiya, Dakahliya, Sharqiya,
Menoufiya and Qalioubiya—each with 300,000 to 900,000
inhabitants, spread like a fan over the Delta. These six,
whose names date from the Arab Period, are the most
populous and best irrigated.

In Upper Egypt, strung out along the Nile Valley, are ⁶³⁵ eight more provinces, named with one exception after their chief towns (*bandars*). These are, from north to south, Giza, Beni-Suef, Fayûm, Minia, Assiut, Girga, Qena and Aswan.

At the head of each province, called *mudiriya*, is a high official called the *mudîr*. His authority comes directly from the Ministry of the Interior, and he is frequently transferred. If he distinguishes himself he is brought nearer the capital, or even becomes a minister. On the other hand, if he falls out of favour he may be sent further south. He settles as the Government's representative in the more or less important but never very attractive town which is the capital of his *mudiriya*. As he is naturally more in touch with great men than with small, he has no direct knowledge of the fellaheen, who moreover cannot come into direct contact with him. They hear him spoken of, pay the taxes due to him, and catch a glimpse of him when an official visit brings him to their village. They think of him as being of a higher race than themselves, and revere him as a kind of demi-god. To them he seems all-powerful.

Outside the chief town the Mudeer's authority is exer-⁶³⁴ cised by Maamûrs. Each *mudiriya* is divided into *markaz* or ⁶²⁵ police districts, from three to seven in number, except for Gharbiya, the most densely populated, which has twelve. The *maamûr*, a kind of chief constable, controls a police force distributed among the principal villages of his *markaz*. He is an executive officer enjoying very wide powers. The fellah thinks them unlimited, and has a corresponding respect for the man who exercises them.

The Maamûr is the fellah's king. The story is told of a fellah who said to the Khedive 'Abbas, in all good faith: 'God save you, and make you our *maamûr*.'

Yet even the *maamûr* does not know the fellaheen, their affairs, or their families, except through the *omda*. And the limited knowledge which the fellah has of politics or administration — citizen and voter though he be — comes to him through his *omda*, who for him is the sum of the law.

Each of the 4,000 villages of Egypt is governed by an ⁶²² *omda* or mayor. He is nominated from among the leading inhabitants of the village which he rules and of which he often owns a part. Indeed he cannot be a candidate for

622 the post, by the law of 1895, unless he is owner of at least ten feddans. His appointment is usually preceded by rivalries which may turn into brawls, and followed by feuds that often end in death.

The *omda*, however, knows very well how to protect and even avenge himself, for he alone transmits information to the *maamûr*, and has sole charge of twenty or more night-watchmen (*ghaffirs*). Indeed, his chief duty is to ensure public security in the village and the surrounding country rather than to concern himself with improvements or with public health, to which he gives no more thought than those under him.

He represents his village district (*nahya*) before the *maamûr*, is responsible for any crimes committed in it which are reported, supports the *sarraf* in the business of tax-collecting, sees to the levy of men required for any given task, takes charge of the post and telephone, controls the carrying of arms, reports the outbreak of disease among people or cattle, and records births and deaths.

622 He is not paid by the Government, but apart from the
692 value of the prestige attaching to his office, he has various
624 privileges. He is exempt from taxation on five feddans, from forced labour, and from military service. This applies both to himself and to his sons. By custom, if not by right, the position of *omda* remains the privilege of one family. If the village is large and important, the *omda* is assisted by sheikhs, with whom he deliberates before giving his decisions. One of my pupils, the son of an *omda* in Upper Egypt, describes the procedure as follows: 'My father has 25 *ghaffirs* under his orders. From 5 p.m. to 5 a.m. they are on watch in the fields, with the exception of two who
622 remain on guard at the *omda*'s house. If there is a trial,
692 it is conducted thus: The *omda* sits down in his *montaza*, or outer garden, with a few sheikhs (men of some age and
695 responsibility). The two disputants appear, and each gives his explanation of the matter. The *omda* gives his judgment, and tries to reconcile them. If they are not con-
[681] tent to abide by his decision, he locks them up in jail until the following day and then sends them to the *markaz* with two *ghaffirs*.

622 An *omda* may imprison for 24 hours, and impose a fine
692 up to 15 piastres. There is no town-hall in the village. The

'*omda*'s house takes its place. All day long he is receiving⁶²² petitioners or travellers, unless he is going the rounds with⁶⁹² some official or inspecting his own fields. He pays frequent visits to the chief town of the district, either for business or for pleasure.

This uncontrolled system, though it has many advantages⁶⁹² for the Government, is full of drawbacks for the fellah,⁵⁷⁸ abandoned as he is to a master who knows no more about administration than about justice. There are indeed exceptions, but they are as yet few. The system is also prejudicial to public security. Crimes may easily be concealed, or even foisted upon the innocent, by such an autocracy. Village feuds usually owe their origin and persistence to the rivalries aroused by this office.

At Nahyet el Barûd, in the *markaz* of Abu Tig, a new⁶²² '*omda*' was to be nominated. Among the candidates for the⁶⁶⁶ position two were outstanding, Sheikh Ahmed Abu Zeid and Sheikh Ahmed Farghali. One of these had been dismissed from the post by official action; the other, who had been *omda* in 1931, had also been dismissed by the Nessim Pasha Ministry. Both candidates were much feared in the district, and each had a large band of supporters. The committee which had to count the votes and then decide the election was formed of the *maamûr*, representatives of the neighbouring villages, and the *maazûn* of the village itself. However, the eligibility of the *maazûn*, as being a relative of one of the candidates, was challenged by the other. The authorities of the *markaz* then let it be known that the *maazûn* of another village would sit in his place. But on the day of the election, which was to be decided by a show of hands, it was seen that the first *maazûn* was still on the committee. His enemy's supporters objected, while his own friends upheld him, and the two parties came to blows. Worse than this, they made use of whatever weapons they could lay hands on, and a savage battle ensued. Before the police could intervene, three men had been killed and a number of others seriously wounded. The authorities arrested both candidates. The *mudîr* of Assiut gave orders that elections at Nahyet el Barûd and the neighbouring villages should be suspended until order was re-established (11th July, 1937).

Towards his superiors, whether officials or landlords, the [8/ fellah adopts an attitude of awesome respect, of servility

181 and mistrust. He puts up with the cruellest treatment from them, and they, despising him as they do, whether they be Egyptians or foreigners, believe that such methods are a necessity.

181 A rich landowner of my acquaintance, an excellent fellow
565 at heart, declared: 'The fellahen must be driven with the
694 lash.' A *modwen* of the police who, as I entered his office, was raining blows on a man up for trial replied to my expression of astonishment: 'This is how you have to treat them. They are beasts.'

369 So great is the cleavage between town and country, between the still uncivilised fellah and the more or less Westernised townsman, that the gulf is neither narrow nor recent. In a private letter written three centuries before Christ these words are found: 'Do not take me for an Egyptian fellah.' Then as now the representatives of the town appeared in the village only to take their rents, or to levy the taxes due to the State⁽¹⁰⁾.

121 We are not for the moment discussing the fellah's psychology; but it must be said in conclusion to this chapter that although he is much sought after as a taxpayer or producer he is still unknown as a man and neglected as a citizen.

565 The political and economic pyramid of Egypt bears down with all its weight on the fellah. The oligarchy at the top may have changed its form, but pressure at the base, that is on the fellah, has been little relieved.

His ignorance, his isolation, his bondage to the soil, prevent him from putting up any resistance to this crushing burden; and it is a burden which moulds his whole life.

CHAPTER IV

THE FELLAH AT WORK

The preceding chapters have given a general picture of the physical and social environment of the Egyptian peasantry. Thus the problem has been stated and approached. We can now attack it directly, by considering the fellah himself, first of all at the work from which he derives his name.

The Arabic word *fellāh*, which has passed into most modern languages, is the intensive adjective of the verb *šālaḥa*, which means to till the ground, labour or toil.

As the reader will have already observed, the fellah is looked upon primarily, if not exclusively, as a 'hand' or agricultural machine. As "economic man", he is equated with labour.

The work of the fellah, even more than his physical and mental make-up or his habitat, is determined by the double environment we have been considering. It seems in fact the mere consequence of the opportunities and limitations created by the soil and by society. His work will thus lead us to the consideration of the fellah as a human being, for it is he who in return carries on the work of the soil and adapts it to human needs. We have here a clear case of reciprocal festivals, interaction.

1. Methods of Work

The dark soil is not only productive, but also exacting from one year's end to another. The fellah, who is not obliged by the Koran to take a weekly day of rest, works the whole year round, and takes a holiday only at the great festivals, that is to say about ten days in a twelvemonth.

The sun shines for at least eleven hours a day, and in May, June and July nearer fifteen. The fellah spends far the greater part of his time in the fields, and for some kinds of work stays there all night.

132 He is exposed to the elements at a mean temperature
 461 of 80°F in summer and 53°F in winter; he works barefoot
 and bare-headed. His labour is all muscular, and apart
 from his hands he uses only a few primitive implements,
 which, however, owing to the quality of the Egyptian soil
 and the multitude of manual labourers, are quite adequate.

PREPARATION OF THE SOIL

412 He uses the *fass* with great dexterity for a hundred
 different tasks, to turn and break the clods of earth, to dig
 furrows and till the land. The *fass* is a big tool, like a hoe,
 but heavy and solid. Its front part being fairly wide, it
 also serves as a spade. Even the poorest of labourers owns a
fass; it is an indispensable addition to his own strong arm.

407 It may be said that every field in Egypt is tilled by hand,
 [92] even when the fellah works with a plough, for the Egyptian
 plough is more of a tool than a machine, though it weighs
 100 lb., and is carried to and from the field on donkey-back.

This is *el mihrat*, the Arab plough without wheels or
 breast, which is found in Palestine, in Syria and throughout
 North Africa. It consists of a wooden frame tipped with a
 flat, ogival share about 10 ins. long, and a shaft about 11 feet
 long, to which the draught animals are attached by a straight
 yoke pressing not on the forehead, as in Europe, but on the
 631 withers. The draught-animals may be two *gamoossas*,
 241 the smallholder's *gamoossa* and a donkey, or two animals
 hired for the occasion — sometimes even a camel and a
 donkey together.

241 The ploughman drives the share in by pressing on the
 461 single handle, and guides the animals as they move by hand
 and voice, without as a rule using either bridle or whip. In
 this way he can till from one third to half a feddan a day.
 If he is an owner his beasts will be better fed, and he will
 be able to till as much as three quarters of a feddan in a
 day. The time employed in ploughing a field is from ten
 to twenty-five days a year. Except in the districts under
 basin irrigation this work can be carried on at any
 season.

407 In the concluding chapter of their study of Egyptian
 241 ploughing⁽²⁰⁾ Audebeau and Mosseri write: "The Egyptian
 plough is the typical implement of areas where it is only
 necessary to scratch the surface in order to bury the seed

and allow it to germinate before the top layer dries. This ⁴⁰⁷ plough is also appropriate when as a result of a limited water ²⁴¹ supply the task is to prevent a premature drying-out of the soil. None of the imported ploughs tested hitherto has proved genuinely superior to the local plough, when mechanical, agricultural and economic factors are taken into account.

The Egyptian plough is the resultant of two interacting factors, the nature of the soil and the means of the fellah (it costs no more than P.T. 100). Its mechanism is so simple that it does not have the effect of dispensing with the ploughman's effort or of putting a distance between him and his furrow; so contact between man and soil remains close.

To level down the tops of the furrows and break up the clods of earth the fellah uses a *zakhafa*. This is nothing but a rough beam of wood, or the trunk of a palm tree, about twelve feet long, on which the fellah stands while it is pulled by a pair of draught-animals. This very primitive instrument thus acts both as roller and harrow, and is sometimes used also to cover in the seed sown by hand. The *zakhafa* is used after ploughing, and about four feddans can be treated in a day.

To level the land, which since it is artificially irrigated must be as even as possible, the fellah uses his *kasabbia*, a sort of coffer weighing about 120 lbs and costing about ^[435] 75 piastres. It has two sides, is open along the front, and is held by two handles, which the fellah raises in order to scrape off the mounds and fill up the hollows with the earth thus picked up.

The *gamoossa* and the donkey have often been mentioned, ²⁹¹ and will continue to be, for they are the two chief aids of the fellah, and are well adapted both to his needs and to Egyptian conditions.

The *gamoossa*, the poor man's cow, is a mud-coloured buffalo, stronger than the ox, and extremely resistant to disease. It must have more fodder than any other draught animal. On account of its great usefulness the fellah takes more care of it than he does of himself, which is not saying much.

If properly fed, the *gamoossa* gives more milk than any cow in Egypt. In winter and spring it needs to graze

231 on about 18 *kirats* of *berseem*, while in summer it consumes daily about 10 or 12 *okes* of fodder (*libn*) consisting of straw, bean-stalks and cotton-seed cake. Provided its moist diet (containing 87% water) is not changed too suddenly to the dry diet of the five summer months, it will give about four thousand *rolls* of milk a year to the cow's two thousand.

[26a] This milk is richer than cow's milk, containing 7% of fatty substances as against 3-5%. The meat of the *gamoossa*, also, is better than veal.

231 All these advantages would make cattle-rearing and
241 dairy-farming very profitable in Egypt, but the fellah does not go in for cattle-rearing; it is not to his interest to fatten his *gamoossa*, which can tackle the work of tillage and water-raising — and these are his chief needs — on a modicum of fodder. The cost of a *gamoossa* is between L.E. 12 and L.E. 25.

231 The Egyptian donkey is a much hardier beast than the horse, as the *gamoossa* is than the cow. It is also an economical animal to keep, having no unusual needs. In the Delta the commonest is the *bâladi* donkey, generally black, which stands about 40 inches high, carries up to 200 lbs. and costs from L.E. 2 to L.E. 3. The white or grey ass of Upper Egypt, called 'Syrian', the kind which tourists ride around the Pyramids, is taller and more handsome. It stands up to four feet high and may be worth as much as L.E. 20.

The camel and the mule, being less adaptable, are little used by the fellaheen.

THE WORK OF IRRIGATION

241 When the soil has been prepared, the next business of the
312 fellah is to water and fertilise it. He does not have to wait anxiously for rain, like the peasant of Transjordan. The water is beside him in the river or the canal, but it has to be raised and distributed. Until he has irrigated his furrows, the fellah cannot rest.

312 Like the arteries and veins of a mighty body, 12,000 miles of canals distribute the waters of the Nile in due proportion to all the crops. 5,000 miles of other canals drain the surplus water back into the Nile, or into the lakes.

At the season called the *gaffaf*, in January (21), double312 gangs are to be seen working with their hands, one on the bank, the other down in the canal bed. Those below pull up the clods of mud and weeds and throw them to those on the bank, who catch them and fling them yet further aside. [805]

In order that this canal system may do its work and the312 water reach the field, the fellah has to make a network of461 runnels which will bring the water to his crops. He is cease-241 lessly occupied in cleaning and maintaining these smaller channels.

When the turn comes for his field to receive its water— five days out of ten in flood time, and six days out of eighteen at low Nile — the fellah stays up night after night in order to lose none of his water ration.

When the water level is high he watches it flow through the channels, and has only to clear away any obstacles. But the water is at low level for 50 to 200 days a year, according to the different regions, and then he has to raise it by hand. Here again he has no modern machinery, but uses the simplest apparatus, as old as the history of Egypt.

When the water level is only about two feet below his field, he has two ways of raising it to the thirsty soil. The first way has now become almost obsolete.

FIRST METHOD

Two men stand face to face on a ledge cut in the bank241 at water level. With four hempen or palm-fibre ropes they312 support a wide shallow vessel about 18 ins. in diameter and 10 ins. deep. It is usually made of light basket-work and more or less waterproof.

Their first movement is to bend slightly down, turning towards the water, then dip their basket and fill it. With a second movement they straighten themselves, turn to the field, and, raising the vessel by a simultaneous movement of their forearms, empty it out into the mouth of the irrigation channel.

This work, which is performed with clockwork regularity, brings into play mainly the muscles of the trunk and the arms. It is very fatiguing and the strongest men cannot bear it for more than three hours at a time. Accordingly [461] two pairs work turn and turn about.

24/ 312 It has been calculated that by this method little more than 200 cubic feet of water, or enough for about one acre, can be raised in a day of twelve hours. Such a yield bears no reasonable proportion to the effort exerted, but the instrument is extremely cheap. As long as poverty remains, such methods will continue in use.

This method is called *nattāla*. It was already known to the fellaheen of Ancient Egypt⁽²²⁾ and is used by Japanese peasants, for example on Shikoku.

SECOND METHOD

One or two men crouch at the water's edge, turning and turning the crank handle of a wooden cylinder, which reaches from water level to the mouth of the runnel. The water rises spirally inside this cylinder, which is about 18 ins. across. This is the *tambour* or Archimedean screw, a wooden cylinder hooped with iron and about six or nine feet in length, according as it is turned by one or two men. The spiral is fixed between the inside wall and an iron axis, one end of which is bent into a crank, while the other turns on a stake fixed under water.

The *tambour* can irrigate two or three times as much as a *nattāla*, but it costs more and is heavier to work. Moreover, since it requires the continual use of the forearm, it is very much more tiring. Nevertheless it is still much in use, and may frequently be seen.

These two kinds of water-lifting machinery are practicable when the water level is not very low, but sometimes water has to be sought three, six or even thirty feet below the level of the field to be irrigated.

The easiest thing would be to instal a pumping engine. There are many of these on the large estates, but none on small properties; for as the fellaheen are numerous and conservative, poor in money and rich in time, this "convenience" does not commend itself to them. They solved the watering problem ages ago in a way which matches their means, and they feel no need to desert their present system for one which may possibly be better, but which is as yet new and untried.

To raise water from a depth of more than three feet the fellah uses a method as primitive as it is simple. He plants

in the earth, at the water's edge, two stakes about five feet²⁴¹ high and a yard apart. When wood is scarce, these two³¹² pillars are made of cane or maize stalks daubed over with mud. They are joined at the top by a horizontal bar, like the crossbar of a goalpost. At the middle of this crossbar is balanced a lever more or less straight and about ten feet long. Its shorter arm bears a heavy rock or a great lump of dried mud, and at the end of the longer arm hang two or three yards of rope carrying a bucket, leather basket or old petrol can. This apparatus is placed in the same axis as the channel to be filled.

The fellah stands on a platform made halfway up the bank and pulls down the balanced pole until the bucket dips into the water and fills itself. A slight upward push, helped by the counterweight, brings it just above the runnel, into which it is emptied. All these movements are slow and rhythmic, sometimes accompanied by a droning chant.^[533] Their variety might seem to lessen the effort, and yet the fellah finds this task more gruelling than any other. This is the impression one would gather from the melancholy tone of his chant, and it is confirmed by those who have had the patience to collect the words of such songs (²³).

By the end of a twelve-hour day two fellaheen working alternately in two- or three-hour shifts may succeed in watering about 1/8 acre of cultivated land. One apparatus of this kind suffices for the cultivation of a feddan. The water may be taken from a well or a pool.

This method is widespread amongst the poor peasantry of the East and Far East, especially the Arabs. But the system originated in Egypt. It may be seen depicted on the oldest bas-reliefs, and nowhere else is it so much in use.

The *shadûf*, as it is called, may be used in combination. In the region of Qena and Dendera, in Upper Egypt, you may still see sets of two, three or four of these apparatus used together or in series, to raise the water from a depth. But when the level is very low the *sagia* is more often used.

The *sagia* is really a machine, though clumsy and primitive. It is made from acacia or sycamore wood and driven not by manpower but by beasts.

The great horizontal wheel, turned anti-clockwise by a harnessed ox or donkey, engages with its rough cogs a vertical

241 wheel carrying a long chain of pots which move mouth down-
312 ward into the water to fill, and then tip out their water into
the channel as they arrive at the top. The *saqia* and the
Archimedean screw have been continuously in use since the
times of the Ptolemies.

[47] A *saqia*, costing as it does from L.E. 10 to L.E. 20,
476 according to its depth, is often the common property of several
families. Each family in turn brings its own beast to draw
water, and the work goes on without any break. One
feddan can be irrigated in this way in 24 hours, and one
saqia can supply five feddans.

The fellah's task is to goad the animal, to watch the
turning of the wheel and the flow of water, and to avoid
wastage on the way to the field, which may be anything up
to three furlongs away. Usually an old man or a child is
[88] left in charge, and as the ungreased wheels continue their
857 ceaseless groaning, the child hums for joy at every movement
he makes.

The *saqia*, with variations such as the *taboot* or water-
wheel, is found in its thousands all over Egypt. Under
the name of *noria* it is used by peasants in Syria, North Africa,
Spain, Italy and Greece.

It is clear that the business of watering makes very great
demands on the fellah's energy and endurance. Yet he is
not satisfied with the strict minimum, and is often accused
of giving the soil too much water.

[242] He does not understand that frequent and copious water-
ing raises the underground water-level, and that when this
reaches four feet below the surface it stifles the roots and
makes the plants turn yellow. He only knows the evil
effects of drought. So when his turn comes he never wastes
a moment, but gives his crop as much water as he can.
To him, lack of water means a failure or at least a low crop;
and that means poverty. There is no question that innumera-
ble troubles and anxieties beset the fellah in his efforts to
get the water which he needs for his little plot. The over-
[656] seers of irrigation in the provinces and the watchmen whose
duty it is to see to the opening of sluices often disregard the
orders and regulations which assure a just supply. In
this matter favouritism, injustice and even personal spite
are often indulged in with impunity.

MANURING

Watering is not enough; the soil needs nourishment to make it productive. The fellah knows only too well that the fertilising powers of the soil must be revived. Together with his wife and children he does his best to find, at as little expense as possible, as much animal or chemical manure as he can. 241
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Pigeon droppings, silt cleaned out of canals and mixed with grass, and, above all, soil impregnated with stable-dung (*sebakh bāladi*), (but never human excrement), village debris and age-old dust, all contribute nitrogen to his field. The rubbish mounds (*koms*) of dead cities become quarries to which the fellah turns for his manure. This *sebakh kufri*, as it is called, is found in varying qualities all over Egypt; but nowadays most of what is left is of poor quality.

In the cliffs of Upper Egypt there is also a kind of sand (*marog*) and a clay (*tafla*) which serve as a poor manure, and need much labour to bring to the fields. But all these manures are lacking in salt content. The used-up soil needs artificial remedies. Despite the fellah's hidebound methods his sympathy with the soil has helped him to understand its need. Since the early years of this century, good *sebakh kufri* having become almost unobtainable, he has begun to use chemical manures (*semād*). Before the present war (1939), Egypt used to import more than half a million tons of natural nitrates from Chile, the earliest known source, and synthetic nitrates from Germany and England. These may be used on all except leguminous crops (berseem, fenu-greek, and beans), which need phosphates. 241
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The distribution of *semād* is most efficiently organised by the *Crédit Agricole d'Égypte*, which sells it by the sack on credit, and also by the Royal Agricultural Society and the big import firms. There are about 2,000 depots spread all over the country. The chief customers are the big landowners and the State Domains, which advance to the owners and tenant farmers the amount required for each holding against part of the crop. Before the war a sack of 100 kilograms, delivered to the village, used to cost from 65 to 70 piastres. Corn crops require the most expensive fertilisers, but the cheapest qualities are good enough for *berseem*. 241
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241 This 'leaven of the land' has still to be put to the soil.
 242 Twenty times a day the donkey, laden with great panniers
 292 or sacks and driven by the fellah's son, carries the manure
 293 to the field and goes back to reload. There are no carts or
 barrows for this work, and the distances are often great.
 The farmer lays down the manure generously, whether it
 be natural humus or chemical fertiliser, and packs it by hand
 round the plant to be encouraged.

GETTING IN THE CROPS

461 All this attention is paid to the soil in order that it
 may yield its fruits. It follows that the fellah's work must
 continue from seed-time till harvest. The days are gone when
 he could go away after sowing and return in a few months'
 time to gather the crop. The struggle for life has become
 continuous and unrelenting. Since the introduction of cotton
 and the establishment of perennial irrigation, the fellah has
 no slack season and is always tending some crop or other.

241 The crops follow a system of rotation covering a 'period
 805 of two or three years. Taking cotton first, the succession
 221 will be as follows:

February-October	Cotton
November-May	Wheat, berseem or barley
May-June	(Partly fallow)
June-November	Maize or rice
December-February	Berseem
April-October	Cotton
November-May	Winter cereals or berseem
May-November	Maize (or fallow)
November-March	Berseem or winter cereals
March-June	(Partly fallow)
June-October	Maize or rice
November-March	Berseem

This calendar of crop rotation is observed with but
 little variation everywhere in the country, according to the
 need and experience of the farmer. I have translated it
 into Gregorian months; but the fellaheen keep to the Coptic
 Calendar, which is based on the Nile flood and goes back to
 ancient times. It begins with the month of T4t (September),
 in which the Nile reaches its highest level, and divides the
 solar year into twelve months. There is a series of Arabic
 [538] proverbs deriving originally from Pharaonic Egypt, which

assign to each month its proper task. Wheat, which at that time was the main crop, is frequently mentioned, but the new-fangled cotton not at all ⁽²⁴⁾. 241
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This same calendar also regulates the Coptic ecclesiastical year, for when Christianity came to Egypt it made no change in the existing customs. The reckoning begins from A.D. 284, the first year of Diocletian's reign, called 'The Year of the Martyrs'. In actual fact, the great persecutions took place in A.D. 304. 241
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Moslems, on the other hand, start from the *hegira*, or Flight of the Prophet (622 A.D.), and count in lunar months.

Since 1875, Egypt has officially employed the Gregorian Calendar, which is gradually penetrating everywhere. The Government has not kept the ancient Egyptian names for the months, nor has it translated the Roman names. It has simply taken over their popular adaptations as follows: - *yanayer*, *febrayer*, *máris*, *abril*, *myo*, *yányo*, *yályo*, *oghostos* and so on. The Ministry of Agriculture works by this calendar to the exclusion of the other two, and so, if not actually used by all the fellaheen, it is understood by most of them.

At this point it will be convenient to describe the principal crops of contemporary Egypt, which are also those at which most of the fellaheen work, namely cotton, which is the main source of the country's wealth; maize and wheat, which provide its daily bread; and *berseem*, the fodder of its cattle. Of the rest we shall say only a word or two in passing. 241

A. THE "GARDENING" OF THE COTTON PLANT

Cotton was not unknown to the Ancient Egyptians. Some fabrics of Pharaonic times seem to be woven of cotton thread, and Pliny mentions its use. Its development in Egypt for industrial purposes took place in the mid-nineteenth century after the experiments of Jumel. Perennial irrigation, introduced about the same time, together with the increase of the population, and the advantageous openings on the English market, very soon made cotton the principal crop of the country. The world crisis of 1930, which led to a slump in cotton, forced the Egyptian Government to restrict it to a quarter of the total cultivated area. Despite 248
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248 this control cotton remains the staple crop of Modern Egypt,
656 It is planted in every *mudiriya* from Beheira to Aswan.

248 First of all, to avoid intermixture of varieties, which would lower the quality and ruin the reputation of its long-staple cottons, the Ministry of Agriculture takes over the control of all seed from the time of ginning. The fellah buys his seed well in advance from agents of the Royal Agricultural Society, the *Crédit Agricole* or ginning firms. When the field has been prepared by two or three cross-ploughings and divided into furrows, he brings the seed for planting. Then he pushes a few seeds at a time, from six to ten according to the variety, into small holes set about eight inches apart on the southern edge of the furrow and made with a sort of dibble, which also serves as a measuring stick. A fortnight later he visits his seedlings, and near any holes which show no signs of growth he plants more seeds, which he waters by hand. After six weeks the young plants are grown and are even too close. The fellah proceeds to thin out the clusters, leaving in each hole two plants only, and rooting out all the rest. Meanwhile he irrigates the fields, every 15 to 25 days in May and June, and every 12 to 15 days in July. After seeing that every furrow gets its complement of water he uproots the weeds and strips the top bud from each plant, so as to improve the growth of the cotton by preventing the stem from growing too tall. In this way thousands of square miles are not so much farmed as gardenized.

348 Like gardening, cotton cultivation demands abundant
461 labour at command. It therefore presupposes, or produces,
464 a dense population, unless machinery makes up the shortage, as in the United States. It is all the easier to obtain the large number of workers required, as the work itself is easy. Women and children here are as good as men, and increase the family's earnings. This fact has contributed largely to the success of cotton in Egypt.

[533] After a brief flowering, which begins in July, the pod bursts open, then the fruit develops and is ready for picking. Twice between the end of August and early October, the whole of the village, divided into gangs under the harrying orders of overseers (*rayeas*), sets to work picking the cotton. There is a recognised chanter of work-songs, to the rhythm of whose music the white tufts of the cotton plant must be deftly stripped off. None must be missed, yet not a single

leaf may be picked with them. When the pouch formed by raising the lap of the *gallabiya* is filled, the worker goes to empty it in a clearing in the middle of the field, and then resumes his place in the line. From the clearing an endless file of fellaheen carries the cotton to the storeyard (*shoona*) belonging to the owner or the bank. Thence, some time later, it will go on donkey or camel back to the ginning and pressing factory, where from September to April, in an atmosphere of stifling dust, thousands of fellaheen, especially children, load and unload the ginning machines which separate and sort the seeds⁽²⁵⁾. After a third picking nothing is left on the fields but brushwood. This is pulled up by hand, or cut down level with the soil, then bound into bundles and stacked on the rooftops to be used as fuel.

B. The Poor Man's Bread

After cotton, maize is the most important crop, covering about a million and a half feddans. Its introduction and general adoption are comparatively recent, though it became popular in Egypt before cotton, and was already well established in the Mameluke period.

In 1810 Sylvestre de Sacy wrote: "*Dura*, a large species of millet, is one of the commonest crops in Upper as well as Lower Egypt, and the people live in great part on bread made from *dura*."

Dura is the Arabic name for maize. The Ministry of Agriculture calls it *dura shamiya* or Syrian maize, to distinguish it from *dura eweiga* or *rafi'a*, the ancient millet.

Throughout Africa, wherever there is sufficient water and a rich soil, the different varieties of millet are giving place to maize, a cereal of American origin which is easy to cultivate, quick-bearing and favourable to a subsidiary crop. This is especially the case in Egypt. In fact the *dura rafi'a* is now planted only on about 300,000 feddans in Upper Egypt, where the basin irrigation system still holds, and is growing rarer with the advance of perennial irrigation. Maize has conquered the Nile Valley, because it has proved so suitable to the fellah and to the soil that it is reputed the world's best. Only that of Mozambique can compare with it.

The fellah sows it broadcast in July, gives it plenty of manure, and waters it seven times. Thirteen to fifteen

243 weeks later the stalks stand higher than a man and are laden with heavy ears. It is time for harvesting. The workers, mainly women and children, pile the stalks into heaps, and then make a first sorting, throwing on one side the ears of maize, on the other the stripped stalks. The yield of a maize crop may be ten or twelve *ardebs* to the *feddān*, but the average for the country is seven and a half.

The stalks are now set up on end and intertwined to make a sort of circular hedge round the heaps of ears. In this open enclosure the fellaheen work day and night to strip the ears and break out the yellow grain, bigger than peas, [342] which they put into baskets and carry home. The stalks [372] are also taken home on donkey back to serve as fuel or reinforcement for the roof. Nothing must be wasted.

C. Wheat

Wheat, on the other hand, has been since antiquity a traditional Egyptian crop. It is nowadays regaining some of the importance which it lost earlier to cotton, and is benefiting from the recent tendency towards greater variety of crops. In 1934 1,388,673 *feddāns* were sown. In 1939 the area had increased to 1,466,000 *feddāns*, which gave a total yield of 8,600,000 *ardebs*, or an average of 5.96 per *feddān*.

[262] Almost all the wheat is consumed in Egypt, by middle-
[439] class Egyptians and the people in the towns. Owing to its low percentage of gluten and record earth-content it is barely exportable, though in 1937 Germany was negotiating purchases. Europeans and rich Egyptians prefer foreign flour, mostly imported from Australia or Canada.

The fellah sows his wheat in November. He pays great [312] attention to manuring and watering up to the period of the
[242] *gaffaf*, after which he waters it only once or twice more before harvest. He harvests in April, with a primitive sickle or by hand. The crop is bound into sheaves and carried on donkey-
[492] or camel-back to the communal threshing-floor, where it is untied.

Each family in turn spreads out its crop. The *gamoossa* is brought to tread out the ears of corn spread over the ground. The poorest of the fellaheen beat their corn with
[407] their staves (*nabbuts*). More often several of them share a

norag. This is a heavy wooden seat, supported on a rough chassis and moving on three axles armed with eleven solid sharp-edged discs for breaking up the straw. The driver sits in the chair and guides the *gamoossa* round in a circle over the ears so that the discs chop them up, while another worker throws fresh stalks under the machine. The *norag*, which is peculiar to Egypt, costs about L.E. 8. An even simpler variety without the cutting discs averages L.E. 3. [435]

Winnowing is done, as in most Mediterranean countries, by throwing the chaff which contains the corn into the air in the direction of the wind, after it has been trampled and chopped up. For this the fellaheen use a two- or four-pronged wooden fork, called a *garuf*. With one *norag* and several *garufs* they can deal with the produce of about 25 feddans. [412]

Last of all the grain is sifted in large sieves by the women and put into sacks, jars or baskets, ready for sale. [462]

D. Berseem

In summer cattle are fed either on chopped straw mixed with beans, or on barley; but in winter they live on *berseem*, an Egyptian species of clover (*trifolium alexandrinum*). *Berseem* is cultivated everywhere and covers a fifth of the total acreage, for it nourishes the ground as well as the cattle by absorbing the nitrogen from the air into the soil. It provides excellent forage, grows quickly and brings good returns for a minimum of work. The fellaheen sow it between September and November, often after maize, cotton or rice, and before taking away the old stalks which serve to protect the seedlings. After fifty days or so it is ready for a first cutting, followed by four more at intervals of 35 days; the cattle graze on it as it grows. Two thirds of a feddan will feed a *gamoossa*, or a quarter of a feddan a donkey, for one season. [246]

E. Other Food Crops

There are a number of other foodstuffs which are produced by the fellah's labour from the soil of Egypt. It will suffice to mention the most important. [243]

Rice was brought from India under the Caliphs, and is cultivated in the well-watered regions of Damietta and the Northern Delta. [175]

243 Northern Delta. It occupies about 6% of the cultivated area, but its acreage depends on the height of the Nile flood, and is controlled by the Government. Thus in 1935 there were 470,375 feddans under rice, in 1937 only 240,469, and in 1939 476,454. The rice is of good quality and can be exported.

241 Beans (*fûl*) provide fodder for draught animals, from
[262 June to December; those of the best quality, prepared with
252] oil or fat, make a rich and popular dish.

Onions and sugar-cane are grown in Upper Egypt.

Then there are barley, lentils and dates, not to mention vegetables and fruits, the cultivation of which, although confined to certain localities, increases year by year.

The fellah keeps a narrow strip or corner of his field for his own use. Here, without using any manure, he plants the vegetables appropriate to each season: *bamia* in winter, *fûl* in spring and *molokhiya* in summer. These will be mentioned again in the chapter on the fellah's food. Apart from occupying much less space than other crops, they are cultivated in much the same way as the rest.

241 Egypt is becoming a land of variety in crops, but this
463 diversity has not involved any sort of specialisation for the
181 fellah. He is still a manual labourer, a "Jack of all trades", and his work remains simple and monotonous. There is not enough differentiation to form specialists of any kind, nor enough uniformity to limit his work to one dull task. This means that the fellah can adapt himself to any new crop. He will never introduce a novelty himself, but will take to it if encouraged by authority, the more readily if experience proves it to pay. This has been noticeable in the case of flax.

177 Mechanical innovations, however, are a very different
242 matter. The preceding pages will have made it clear that
407 there is never any question of tractors, reapers or binders, let alone winnowing or threshing machines, or even cars and waggons. Such machines as these are scarcely more common today than in the past. The fellah is too poor to use them, and in any case he feels no need for any instrument which would divide him from the soil. It is true that the large estates under direct cultivation employ extremely modern machinery, which is handled by fellaheen, but this is an

exception. The fellaheen as a whole use no machinery at all. This is probably due less to habit or ignorance than to an instinct for self-preservation. If machinery is not more commonly used in Egyptian farming, the reason is that the owners find man-power more economical. For the moment the two points of view coincide. But it will not always be so. One day the fellaheen will increase their demands, and machines will become more profitable to the landowners. Manual labour should keep its leading place, however, for to mechanise labour in the Nile Valley would be to destroy the organic relationship which has grown up between the cultivators and their soil, and overthrow a balance now preserved by methods of labour appropriate to an abundant population.

2. Conditions of Work

To this soil the fellah devotes all his energies. He gives himself to it without reserve, even passionately when it is his own. But that is very rare. Here man belongs to the land, not the land to him. This is the true cause of both his lethargy and his poverty. None of the conditions under which he may labour make for freedom. Let us look in turn at each of the varying conditions which obtain today.

The Fellah as Forced Labourer

The *corvée* was suppressed in 1893, but continues to be legally applied in certain cases of public necessity. Then the fellah is mobilised by authority, torn from his field and his village, and sent to the spot where his services are needed.

It may be that the Nile flood threatens catastrophe. On such occasions hundreds of thousands of fellaheen are set to work day and night under the rod of officials and overseers to raise the embankments, build dykes, deal with any escape and watch the barrages.

Suppose a dyke is on the point of breaking. The fellaheen rush in a compact mass to the point of danger, each with his *fass* and basket. They heighten the dyke and buttress it with a great rampart composed of earth, rushes, palm-trunks, and — if need be — maize-stalks and sugar-cane.

In 1934 they saved the country by such efforts. The Government set aside L.E. 150,000 to fight the danger ;

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[652] it was used to buy materials and to pay travelling expenses and bonuses for officials. The fellaheen got no wages for their pains, no compensation for their enforced absence from the fields.

By law every Egyptian is liable to be enlisted in the fight against the flood danger. In fact, none but the fellaheen are ever called upon. However, according to the Speech from the Throne of May 1936, "No-one shall be employed henceforward on the embankments of the Nile or of the basins during the flood period without receiving appropriate payment ⁽²⁶⁾".

But there are other dangers which may threaten the prosperity of the country, cotton disease, for instance. To get rid of this pest a swarm of men, women and children must bend over the cotton plants from six o'clock till midday and from two o'clock till six, and search them row by row, plant by plant, leaf by leaf. Each infected leaf must be delicately nipped off and put into the lap of the *gallabiya*. If a single diseased leaf escapes notice the overseer just behind will see it and bring his stick down at once on the back of the culprit.

"I went up to one of these poor wretches toiling under the lash in the heat of the sun and asked him how much he got per day for his trouble : 2 piastres ⁽²⁶⁾".

In June 1936, for example, by virtue of the law of 1910, ⁽²⁷⁾ a million young fellaheen were mobilised to save 435,785 feddans attacked by the pink worm ⁽²⁸⁾, which devours the cotton bolls; it reproduces itself five times in a year. The Royal Agricultural Society is offering L.E. 20,000 to anyone who can find a remedy for this new plague of Egypt. Such a discovery would put an end to at least one sort of forced labour.

There is a third sort of emergency. About once every five years, the last time being in 1931 (the 1937 invasion was stopped in the desert), Egypt is attacked by vast swarms of locusts, which would destroy all the crops unless another host went out to meet them. Entire villages are transported to the worst affected areas (under the decree of 16th June 1891) to drive the swarms back to the desert or towards the sea. The method used consists in digging long trenches, keeping up smoke screens, shrieking, and flapping branches,

to prevent the locusts from settling and to hasten their departure. 466
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A fourth case remains to be noted. It is usual, though 651
not obligatory, for a fellah who wishes to keep in his omda's
good books to work for him several days without pay.

The Fellah as Day Labourer

Day labourers are recruited *en masse* by a *rayess* or 464
foreman to dig a canal, mend a road, or gather in a crop. Each 466
man brings his own *fass*, and the whole gang carries out the
required task under strict surveillance, like a gang of prisoners
and often far from home. This drafting of men hired
by a *rayess* into a locality where hands are short is called
tarkila. For a twelve-hour day with a brief midday rest the
pay is two or three piastres. A big landowner tells me that [465]
on his estate the fellaheen are usually paid three piastres
a day, for either ploughing or working on cotton (30). The
tarkila is chiefly applied in Upper Egypt, where cotton is
cultivated less, but labourers are more easily obtained and
large estates are more common. It is also applied on State
Domains which are under direct cultivation.

When day labourers are not attached to the estate 464
they are subject to unemployment and want, except at
times when big works make their help necessary. The
more fortunate are engaged by the year, somewhat like the
obbligati of Italy. Such men receive regular payment,
partly in kind and partly in cash. For example, an owner
lets a *feddan* to a fellah on credit. The wages for days spent
at work for the owner are deducted from the rent payable.
At the end of the year the fellah has a debit or credit accord-
ing to the total of days he has worked. In other cases
the fellah is paid only one piastre a day, but gets in addition
the crop of maize from one *feddan*.

The temptation here is to work as little as possible. 461
But it must be noted that owing to the abundance of hands 465
the day labourer's wage remains extremely low. The changes
due to the war have not increased it, and 5 piastres is a maxi-
mum rarely attained, whether for fellaheen, transport workers
or small craftsmen (30). Such wages are insufficient to sup-
port a fellah and his family, but a certain compensation is
found in the traditional extras — the women's gleanings,

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465 the produce of the vegetable patch, or a present of maize.

The Fellah as Share-Cropper

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As day labourer the fellah works on large properties, as *mélayer* or share-cropper on a small plot of five or at most ten feddans. Under this system the owner enters into partnership with the fellah as follows:

The owner pays the taxes and irrigation dues, provides the farm implements, cattle, seed and manure. The fellah, as head of a family, provides labour for all the year's crops, from ploughing to harvest. For this he receives a fifth or a quarter of the yield of his plot. He may also bear half the expenses, in which case he takes half the crop. The contract is always verbal, and varies in detail.

This system involves no risk as it guarantees the owner a maximum of work, and the fellah his livelihood. It cannot, however, be very profitable to the fellah, because even if he labours continuously with every possible aid from his family he cannot manage to work more than five feddans. At the end of the year he has only the produce of one or one and a quarter feddans, that is to say about L.E. 12, for the efforts of his whole family over twelve months. In a bad year he will have less to show even than this. Finding [426] himself short of money before harvest, he goes to the owner for an advance to buy a *gallabiya*, or pay the expenses of a circumcision or a funeral. Such loans, with their interest, sometimes come to more than his part of the bargain. In this case he will not only receive nothing when accounts come to be settled, but in addition his work will be already pledged for the following year.

The Fellah as Tenant Farmer

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To rent land outright is more adventurous. The tenant takes a field at a fairly high rent, from L.E. 6 to L.E. 22 a feddan according to the district; he pays all expenses, but keeps all the produce. The owner is responsible only for taxes. The lease is long, and usually covers the full rotation of crops over two or three years.

For example a fellah of the rich district of Mit-Ghamr rents two feddans at L.E. 20 for the agricultural year. He [243] plants one with cotton, which produces 4 *cantars* ⁽³¹⁾, each [248] worth about L.E. 3½. The cotton goes to the owner, making L.E. 14 towards the rent. On the other feddan he sows

part *berseem*, and part wheat for the winter. The *berseem* ⁴²⁷ is consumed by his cattle, the wheat produces $2\frac{1}{2}$ *ardebs*, ²⁴³ selling at about L.E. 8, but the landowner keeps back L.E. 4 ²⁴⁸ of this as the second instalment of rent.

The tenant then plants his maize for the *nili* crop on his two feddans, but before the harvest he must pay the balance of his rent (L.E. 2) to the owner, and can then take the maize for himself. In fact it is only the yield of this last crop which really belongs to the fellah and his family. After setting aside enough to feed his family, he sells what is left. If all goes well he may be about L.E. 6 to the good.

But all may not go well. If the crop has been poor, or ⁴²⁷ there was a blight, or the crop has been badly sold, the tenant ⁷³¹ must still pay the full rent, as provided in Article 392 of the ⁶⁵⁶ Egyptian Civil Code. Ruin is the result. Sometimes (e.g. in the three years from 1929 to 1932) catastrophe has been so general that the Government has had to issue decrees for the reduction of rent in a proportion of 25% to 40% according to the date of contract. The State cannot always intervene, and owing to the keen demand land is rarely let except at high rents. The consequences for the fellah are frequently disastrous.

One unhappy tenant farmer, whose *gamoosaa* had just ⁴²⁷ been seized, explained the situation to an inquirer in these ⁵¹¹ words:

"I hired two feddans at L.E. 12 apiece. On each I spent L.E. 5 in seeds, manures and so on, not to mention my labour, that of my children, and the help of my animals throughout the year. What is the result? One feddan yielded four *cantars* of cotton, which sold at L.E. 12. The other produced five *ardebs* of corn and seven of maize, which brought me L.E. 13. Out of this L.E. 25 I had already spent L.E. 10, so how could I pay my rent of L.E. 24? I had to sell the *gamoosaa*."

"But if you only lose, why continue to rent land?"

"Because farming is the job I learnt from my fathers, and I don't know how to do anything else."

"But why rent land at such a high price?"

"Because the local landowners have conspired to keep the prices up, and the fellaheen do not know how to get them lowered."

427 Then he added, "Since everything we had has been taken
511 from us, we will steal." (22)

The Fellah as Landowner

423 We have seen that more than two million fellahs
554 possess a patch of land each. Four fifths of this number
183 own a plot so small — from two kirats to one feddan — as
not to suffice a family for either employment or support.
Nevertheless among the rural proletariat these small land-
owners are the 'privileged class'. It is every fellah's ideal
to get land, as it is to marry, have children, and own a
gamoossa.

183 The owner of a small field has the same things to buy as
651 a tenant: seed, manure, animals and implements (these last
452 usually in partnership with others). He has no rent to pay,
but is liable for taxes, and usually interest on debts. The
fellah is a poor hand at finance, and rarely has any savings;
he borrows money to buy seed or fertilisers, to rent a neigh-
bouring field which will round off his patch, or even, instead
of paying off his debts, to buy it.

452 Since the banks do not lend small sums, he borrows
427 from private persons, who, in spite of the 1912 Law limiting
the maximum interest to 10%, lend him at 30% or even
50%. The interest, if not the debt itself, has to be paid.
However hard he works, himself and all his family, in
an effort to make his field produce its utmost with the least
possible expenditure, he is almost always caught on the
wrong leg when the payment falls due. Then he has to hand
over all the fruits of his labour, or else sell part of his land.

There is a law (of December 3, 1912) which forbids seizure
of the 'homestead', that is to say, five feddans or less. This
law, by denying the banks any guarantee for their loans, has
prevented smallholders from benefiting by the legal means of
credit, and thrown them into the hands of moneylenders.

The fellah must have credit. As often as not, by his
own fault, he does not know how to make his loans pay;
the harsh terms engulf him deeper and deeper in debt, and
the more he borrows the worse he fares. Land debts are
like a cancer devouring the small landowner (23).

423 However, the fellah who owns land is, in name at least,
432 owner of its products, especially of the cotton, which the

fellaheen of every other category see snatched from their hands; he can sell his few *cantars* of this precious crop for his own profit. ⁴²³432

One feddan, on which he has spent about 30 piastres for seed, 100 piastres for chemical manure, and 70 piastres for taxes, irrigation, and petty expenses, may bring him in L.E. 10. If he is pressed for money the fellah sells his cotton at once to the money-lending merchant in his village, who takes advantage of the seller's need, of his ignorance of market fluctuations, and of the multitude of similar offers, to buy at the lowest price. If the fellah is more intelligent, he can take his cotton to the *halaga*, or cotton market, of the neighbouring town. There, since 1912, weights and prices have been controlled by the Government, and buyers cannot trick the sellers. ⁴³²434

When his need of money is less imperious, the small farmer does not sell his cotton immediately it is picked. He stores it in the *shoona* of a big landowner, a bank or a cotton firm, against an advance with which he can pay his most pressing debts. Offers to purchase are made at this store in piastres per *cantar*.

Sometimes the cotton is bought in advance; that is to say on sowing, the small farmer promises to deliver to so-and-so such-and-such a quantity of a given quality. The price is fixed either at the time, or on 'contract terms'. This means that it is based on a fixed minimum with a premium depending on the market value at Alexandria on whatever day suits the seller, provided that it be within the period agreed on at the time of contract.

Yet all these precautions intended to protect the smallholder cannot prevent him from being defrauded sadly often in the sale of his cotton, owing to his ignorance and individualism. It is the same with his other crops.

The *Crédit Agricole*, for example, makes advances on wheat, though only to small farmers, until they can sell their crops at the best price. So far so good. But the village middlemen can easily persuade the *onda* to give them certificates proving that they are also cultivators. They then buy corn at P.T. 120 an *ardeb* from the true fellaheen, who, not knowing where else to turn for money to pay their taxes, are glad to be able to sell. At the beginning of harvest this may seem a good bargain. But an *ardeb* is 175 kg.

432 in the village, while the *Crédit Agricole* takes it at only 150 kg.
434 as in the cities, and advances 130 piastres (1937 prices) on each *ardeb*.

Your cunning merchant proceeds to deposit the wheat, which he pretends to have harvested, in the *shoonas* of the bank. He thus gains 10 piastres and 25 kilogrammes of wheat on each *ardeb* bought, and without assuming any risks himself can confidently expect an additional premium at the time of sale by the *Crédit Agricole*.

461 There are no walls but only low ridges or channels
464 dividing the fields of Egypt. In the same way there is no sharp division between the various kinds of labour which we have just been analysing. None of these categories is self-sufficient, and each overlaps the next. There are few fellaheen who do not pass from one to another, or belong at the same time to two of them. The very conditions of the fellah's life imply a certain similarity in them all.

136 (1) *Poverty*. Because he knows nothing of either fore-
511 sight or economy, and even more because he is weak, isolated and ignorant, the strong and the rich reap the fruits of his labours. The bank or the moneylender, the Government, the *omda*, or the landowner, gathers in most, if not all, of what he has sweated to produce. He himself, to use one of his own sayings, remains "poor as a needle, which clothes others but itself remains unclad".

427 (2) *Dependence*. The fellah can plant neither what he
466 wishes nor when he wishes. As a day-labourer he works
656 in a gang at a definite task under the strictest supervision. As tenant farmer or share-cropper he plants his crops according to the owner's plan. As landowner he is dependent with regard to dates and choice of crops on the orders of the Ministry of Agriculture. He has no sort of liberty or initiative one way or the other.

511 (3) *The minimum standard*. However bad his affairs may be, the fellah is at least certain of his daily bread. No-one actually starves to death in the country; for even under the worst conditions of labour the natural resources of the land remain.

574 (4) *Family Labour*. The help given to the fellah by his family must never be lost sight of. Among the Egyptian peasantry, wife, children, *gamoossa* and donkey make up

the cultivator's 'capital', and constitute the normal rural unit. ⁵⁹⁴

The head of the family works full-time on the land. ⁵⁹⁴
His wife lends a hand at seed-time and harvest, rears poultry ²³¹
at home and makes butter and cheese for sale. His children ²⁴¹
look after the animals, take them to the fields or to water, ⁴⁶¹
gather the dung, watch the *sagia* and collect manure. For
five or six weeks a year they work for wages at cotton-
picking, or fighting the cotton worm, or in the ginning factory.
The *gamoossa* draws the plough, turns the *sagia*, treads
out the corn, and produces manure (mud soaked in urine),
fuel (dung and straw), and milk. The donkey transports
manure, crops, and the fellah himself.

Such a rural unit is sufficient, without any outside help
to cultivate five feddans.

Apart from his daily bread, or subsistence wage in the ⁵¹¹
strictest sense, his year's work brings the fellah in at the ⁴³⁴
most about L.E. 10 in cash. But his assistants are also
consumers, and this money, which would otherwise be clear
profit, has to be spent on such necessities as the following
(pre-war prices are given) :

	P.T.
Oil for the kitchen, extra vegetables, occasional meat, sugar, tea	200
Oil or petroleum for the lamp, renewal of house- hold articles such as plates or water-pots or apparatus such as baskets, summer forage for <i>gamoossa</i> and donkey	100
A new garment (dress or <i>gallabiya</i>) for each member of the family at time of feast	150
Expenses in time of sickness or rejoicing, or for superstitious practices, pilgrimage, or fines ..	50
Unforeseen expenses	500

In the last section, which alone presents any possibility
of saving, come expenses such as those for circumcisions,
funerals, marriages, or dowries, or sums paid for exemption
from military service. There is always one or more of these
to pay for, and often enough the budget shows a deficit.

In estimating the income L.E. 10 was given as a maxi-
mum. For these expenses L.E. 10 is a minimum. That is

511 why the balance of the fellah's budget is so easily upset,
434 and that is why he is so often swamped by debts and
interest.

454 If in any given year, by a stroke of good fortune, none
181 of these extraordinary expenses befall him, the fellah, hoarding
piastre after piastre in a pot hidden in the earth, can
at last see his dream come true, and buy a *gamoossa* or a
few *kirats* of land. It is this alluring possibility, always
just round the corner, which makes him continue year after
year, like the soil and with the soil, the same unwearying
work.

CHAPTER V

THE FELLAH AS A PERSON

We have seen that the fellah's work consists entirely of physical labour and brings his whole body into play. Let us now consider the labourer himself, and examine the fellah from the physical point of view, his race, type, clothing, habits and so on. We shall find once again that water, soil and sun are the physical agents which explain and often even determine the physical constitution of the fellah. 142

Despite this dependence on the material environment, the liberty of the human will introduces an element of variety. But the will in its turn is subject to another factor, conformity to tradition, and this in the end produces the same result — stability.

(1) Race and Type

To what race does the modern fellah belong, and what is his genealogy and origin? No final answer has as yet been found to these questions. Nevertheless, any amount of research has been done on the subject, and any number of theories, serious or not, evolved to explain the facts. 144

To go back no further than the eighteenth century, Volney, for example, declares the fellaheen to be of negroid extraction. Vivant Denon suggests a Caucasian origin. Poinsinet de Sivry, following Pliny the Younger, believes them descended from the Celts. Winckelman suggests Chinese immigration as a solution, and Moreau de Jonnes would put the cradle of the Egyptian race as far away as Polynesia. 174

Ethnologists of the late nineteenth century, with more knowledge and plausibility, sought a key to the problem nearer Egypt, either in Africa or in Asia.

The theory of African origin is upheld by Hartmann, and later by Flinders Petrie and Maspero, who class the Egyptians with the Ethiopians. Chantre, after anthropo-

metric research covering thousands of types both past and present, concludes that the Egyptians, although not absolutely native to their present soil, are essentially Africans, of Libyan extraction, and that if there was any Asiatic infiltration, it had no influence on the race. (21)

Schweinfurth, relying on botanical evidence, believes Southern Arabia to be the source of the Egyptian race, while Amelineau, de Rougé, and (more authoritatively) J. de Morgan, who supports his theory by the comparative study of language, art, customs and physical characteristics, consider Chaldea to be a more likely source. (22)

The theory now in favour, because it is less simple, may be nearer the truth. It can be summed up thus: — In prehistoric times Asiatic invaders, perhaps Arabs or Babylonians, conquered the Nile Valley, and intermingled as the predominant race with people already established there, a composite stock of natives and Ethiopians.

This theory is a synthesis of the two earlier hypotheses, and has the advantage of taking into account facts which support both of them while allowing of the inclusion of the Egyptians in the family of *homo mediterraneus*, a compound of Semitic and Hamitic stocks which peoples North Africa, a great part of Hither Asia, and the shores of the Mediterranean, and shows, where it borders on the black races, certain affinities with the Ethiopians.

The study of profiles in ancient frescoes, and of skeletons discovered in a variety of excavations, obliges us none the less to recognise three original types: the Semites, long-skulled and of medium height; the Mediterraneans, short-skulled, with a short, straight nose; the Libyans, snub-nosed and short-skulled. But the climate and agricultural life have worn away these differences between indigenous and foreign elements and created a specifically Egyptian stock which is no less indivisible than the Nile Valley itself.

However all this may be, and although we may not know precisely where the Ancient Egyptians came from, we can be quite sure that the present inhabitants of the country — or at least the fellaheen, and it is with them that we are concerned — are descended from the Egyptians of dynastic times, with whom they are linked without a break and almost without intermixture, despite the passage of fifty centuries and conquest after conquest from abroad.

The conditions of servitude and contempt in which the native population has been held by foreign conquerors since the decline of the Pharaohs have had the effect of preserving the race. Persians, Greeks, Romans, Arabs, Turks, French and English have in this matter all followed the same policy. They have laid hold on the riches of Egypt, and taken power in order to do so, but have neither associated with nor supplanted the fellaheen who produce the wealth. Egypt has always been too densely populated to be suitable for colonial expansion. The conquerors have never been numerous enough to modify the race of the conquered. Their manner of life has always been different, and contact with them has only aroused antagonism. 174
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There has, however, been some penetration of nomads and negroes from near areas. After the Moslem conquest in the seventh century a number of Arabs settled in Egypt, not only in the towns but also in the countryside. As conquerors they were able to impose on the native inhabitants their language, their religion, some of their customs with regard to women, and their cruelty in vengeance. In spite of this the original inhabitants, a hundred times more numerous, especially in the countryside, with women stronger and more fertile, and a manner of life so persistent and unchanging, have marked the Arab elements with their own stamp. In establishing themselves on the black soil the Arabs adopted the traditions of those who ploughed it. This is still noticeable even today in the villages of the Upper Delta, where on account of the richness of the soil Arab immigration was heavier, and in hamlets recently settled on the edge of the desert. After three or four generations the scion can no longer be distinguished from the stock, or else it has proved too dissimilar to take the graft. Assimilation to type is in fact consequent upon assimilation of the fellah way of life. The Arabs who have remained nomadic, and live by the transport of cotton on camel-back, by pasturing flocks, or by robbery and murder,—those in fact known in Egypt as Bedouin,—differ markedly from the fellaheen by their finer features and their more excitable temperament.

Another fusion has taken place in the south, between fellaheen and negroes. Here, the two elements being more dissimilar, the mixture is more noticeable, but the Egyptian

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144 type is dominant, and the other recessive. This absorption
174 of neighbouring and therefore not unnaturally somewhat
175 similar elements by a settled people of greater vigour and
numbers seems a logical process. Had the invaders or im-
migrants arrived in millions, had they come from Germany
or the Balkans, they might perhaps have imposed their own
type, despite the influence of climate and way of living.
But the deserts on East and West, the depth inland to the
South, and the unusual character of the Nile Valley, as well
as the density of the original population, have kept the
country free from all mass immigrations.

Thus both geographical and historical factors have con-
spired to preserve the Egyptian type. The country popula-
tion especially retains a facial appearance distinguishing it
among the countless mixtures of the Near East.

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F
144 It has been said that the Copts are the purest represen-
779 tatives of the ancient stock. This is true in the towns,
186 where the Copts are usually the original inhabitants, while
the Moslems are for the most part descended from Arabs
and Turks, and have married women from any and every
country. Racial and physical differences are here very
clear. In the country, however, this theory does not fit the
facts. The fellahen who have remained Christian and those
who have become Moslems are of one and the same origin.
If the former for religious reasons marry only with Christians
and have thus kept the race pure, tradition has made the
latter no less exclusive. The antipathy between fellahen
and Bedouin makes marriages between them extremely
rare, and any union with a foreigner who may chance to live
in the village is considered scandalous in the extreme.

F
142 Thus it is possible, in describing the type, to generalize
without appreciable error.

The fellah is a heavily built man, though not stout. His
skull and face are broad, his forehead narrow, his eyes and
hair dark. He has rather prominent cheekbones, a thick
nose, full but not protruding lips, and a heavy jaw. His
features on the whole are rugged but not ill-favoured, and
are neither very sensitive nor very expressive. His thick
wrists, ankles and neck distinguish him from the supple
Bedouin. His back is rounded, his shoulders not so much
sloping as bent in towards the chest, and his hips narrow.

He has rather large, flattish feet and his average height is 142 about 5 ft. 6 ins.

The women are similar, but in proportion. They seem, however, to preserve the original type more purely. (")

These are the features of a single race and of a single type. As with all living things, varieties are not wanting, but they are never wildly different from the norm. For example, the cranial index (about 75) is one point higher in Lower Egypt. There is a slight tendency to the Negroid type as Nubia is approached. Maqrizi and 'Abdel Latif had already noted this in the fourteenth century, and any traveller who gets as far as Aswan can see it for himself. The Sa'idi, or Upper Egyptian, who lives in a drier and hotter climate, is taller, more bronzed, and more vigorous and muscular than the fellah of the Delta. [14]

(2) *Care and Clothing of the Body*

The fellah is not a hairy type of man. He wears his hair cut short, except when in mourning for a male of his household; but he likes to wear a moustache as a sign of virility. In childhood his head is clean-shaven, apart from the ritual tuft. When he becomes old and venerable he lets his beard grow. [588]

The women's hair is too much neglected to be plentiful. Their meagre locks are sometimes tied up with russet or black ribbons, but always hidden under the veil or gathered into a kerchief. [291]

Since the earliest times both sexes have removed the body hair with either a razor or a paste of sugar and alum.

Like all ancient peoples with a long tradition, the fellahs mark their skin with designs ritual, aesthetic and hygienic, which have been handed down from time immemorial. Incision and all forms of coloration are intended not only for ornament, but also as charms and prophylactics.

Girls have the lobes of both ears pierced, and sometimes the side of one nostril. These perforations are kept open by a thread until the ear- or nose-ring is inserted.

All boys, Moslem as well as Coptic, are circumcised with great ceremony by the village barber.

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304 Sometimes, though less commonly nowadays, young girls have the clitoris excised. In some regions boys have their right ears pierced.

The fellahen do not gash their cheeks like the Nubians (Berberines), but they colour themselves, especially by tattooing, which is perhaps the main distinguishing mark of the fellahen, and is applied to men and women alike in adolescence.

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[532] In the middle of the forehead or the chin, on the temples or the backs of the hands, appear dots or geometrical patterns; and on the chest, back or forearm there may be rough designs, such as a sword or tree, a name or a date, and for the Copts [532] a cross more or less floriated. This tattooing is rarely found 304 lower than the waist, and is never obscene.

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304 The work is done by a specialist, usually a Bedouin of 463 the same sex as the patient. The operation takes place in the open, at a street corner on market-day. The method is very primitive and causes painful swellings. The tattooer traces the lines of the pattern selected at a chosen spot on the skin with a *style* made of five to seven needles bound together, or with a sort of pricking stamp. Then he colours the bleeding pattern with lamp-black mixed in oil or spirit. An indelible greenish tint is thus obtained.

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302 The use of henna (*lawsonia inermis*) to dye the hair, hands, feet or perhaps only the nails, is a characteristically Egyptian affectation. It goes back to the Twentieth Dynasty, and Islam has encouraged it^(*). The application of henna is a delicate affair. A poultice, made with the powdered leaves, has to be applied hot and kept on from three to twenty-four hours according to quality. This produces a reddish-orange or brown colouring, which lasts about a fortnight.

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302 Widows dye their hair with henna, to appear younger and attract a second husband. Young women use it to clean their heads and kill lice, to stop hair from coming out, and to make themselves pretty. The shaven heads of children are reddened with henna as a hygienic precaution. The hands, feet and fingernails of the women are only so coloured once or twice a year, at the great festivals.

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302 Kohl^(*) is used to blacken the eyelids and eyebrows, and make the eyes look larger; its function is both decorative

and hygienic. There is no woman who does not use this³⁰² inexpensive cosmetic, both for herself and for her children. On a holiday or when she is tired, she neatly applies it with a kind of stilet dipped into the phial of black.

Circumcision is a therapeutic, tattooing a scarification,³⁰⁴ henna a poultice, *kohl* an eye-salve; for these aesthetic³⁰² devices also serve the fellaheen as preventives or remedies.²⁷⁸ At the same time they also represent magical rites: circum-⁷⁷⁷cision is an act of consecration, tattooing has a symbolic value, henna is a commemorative, *kohl* keeps off the evil eye. Thus a luxury is never devoid of meaning or utility.

The fellaheen do not bathe for pleasure or for clean-⁵¹⁵liness. They have enough contact with water at their work, or in their Moslem ritual ablutions^(*). Every evening these ablutions of hands, feet, face and private parts assure, at least to the men, a minimum of cleanliness. The children splash about naked as soon as they can, or whenever the^[857] beasts have to be watered. The women go into the water dressed and in groups, to wash their dirty clothes and themselves at the same time. For this they use clay or a piece^[296] of wood, and occasionally soap. In many villages the women never have a thorough wash, except on the occasion of their marriage, and once a year at the Great Bairam.

The dress of the fellaheen constitutes the distinguishing²⁹¹ mark of Egypt. While many everyday actions and customs are common to the peasantry of all countries, or at least to all those who are poor, or live in Moslem lands, the fellah differs from them all in his manner of dress, which is immediately recognisable. Yet there is nothing picturesque or fanciful about it, no complication or embroidery such as distinguishes the village dress of Syria and Palestine.

The men wear on their heads the simplest form of covering, a mere skull-cap, which gives no protection against the sun. This brownish felt cap or *libda* is so distinctive of the poor fellah that its very name has furnished him with a title. He is often called *abu libda*, the fellow with a cap, figuring in many a popular tale. Sometimes, and in the case of boys almost always, the cap is made of white calico (*taqiya*). On special occasions, if the fellah is better off or more pious, particularly in the south, he will wind round his cap a long white cloth which serves to protect his neck. This is due to Moslem influence. A good *libda* is deep, and should come

291 nearly down to the ears. Such a *libda* costs three and a half piastres.

The *gallabiya* is the principal garment. It is a tunic of an indigo blue or whitish colour, made of cotton. It is like a long sleeveless shirt, with no waist, closed up to the breast and reaching to the ankles. (The loin cloth of the Ancient Egyptians disappeared shortly before the time of the Ptolemies.) The sleeves are long, and the cut fairly full. A short opening at the chest reveals the black buttons and stripes of a waistcoat. An adult's *gallabiya* needs five [463] metres of material (about six yards) at a price of P.T. 3-6 a [465] metro. The tailor gets three piastres for making one up (**).

291 When at work the fellah tucks up his *gallabiya* above his
461 knees or girds it in at the waist like a blouse, or he may take it off, roll it up and put it aside to serve later as a pillow for his siesta. He then appears dressed in white with a voluminous pair of drawers held up over his hips by a cord and reaching to his knees. His shirt is covered by a waistcoat, but lower down flaps open over the drawers. When it is too hot, he takes off both waistcoat and shirt, and goes about barebacked.

291 His feet, too, are always bare. However, he usually has a rough pair of slippers, made of yellowish leather, which cover his feet to the ankles but are open at the heels. He puts them on for feasts, or after his ablutions. These slippers are locally made, and are called *balgha*.

The boys are naked under their *gallabiya*, which is shorter and lighter in colour than the men's.

Small girls wear a more complicated dress, with waist and bodice. They are often dressed in bright colours or in multicoloured prints. Their hair is always tied up in a muslin kerchief, knotted at the corners. Sometimes, for a veil, they wear a pretty face-towel bought at the market. The women, when they go out, cover their heads and, if they meet a man, the lower part of their faces with a long black veil, glossy or dull, which reaches to the feet and gives them a very graceful outline. In the Qena district this shawl (*milaya*) is dark brown.

The women's dresses, now that imported stuffs have invaded the market, are often brightly coloured. They fit close at neck and wrists, but are not waisted, and usually end in a flounce, which sweeps the ground. Their underclothes

consist of a red, pink or varicoloured petticoat and wide²⁹¹ coloured drawers. The *fellaha* does her own rather clumsy sewing, but the cloth is bought.

The cotton stuffs, calicos and other fabrics used for the^[437] fellah's clothing come mostly from Japan, Italy and India. Imports from other countries are becoming more and more insignificant as the Egyptian weaving industry develops.²⁸⁸ The indigo or black dyes are produced in the country, and³⁸⁶ all the clothes are made up in Egypt. *Gallabiyas* and dresses are made to measure; shirts, drawers, waistcoats and caps are ready-made. Jewish commission agents often under-⁵⁶³ take to supply the big villages with the necessary quantities²⁹² of material or ready-made clothes. The goods are sold just before the big feasts. The old wool-spinners and²⁹⁴ local weavers provide only a small part of the total²⁸⁶ supply (").

The dullness of the women's attire is relieved by striking³⁰¹ ornaments. Round the neck they wear strings of big yellow or blue beads; on their wrists a number of bracelets made, according to wealth or fancy, of glass, silver or even gold; on their ankles the *kholkhal*, a massive anklet of bronze, silver or gold, which takes the place of our wedding ring and must always be worn by a married woman. Everything else may be sold, but not this. If there is a bereavement in the family a woman lays aside her ear-rings, necklaces, and^[765] bracelets; the *kholkhal* she takes off only on the death of her lord and master. The women never wear socks or²⁹¹ stockings, but sometimes use sandals or slippers like the men.

This strikingly simple clothing betokens an old civilisation and a supple adaptability to climate and practical needs. The fellah's loose, simple clothes permit him to breathe easily and to move freely. They keep the outlines of the human form in harmony with the countryside. On the other hand, they are dark-coloured and hot — the head-dress and the women's clothes at least — so that they absorb the sun's heat instead of reflecting it. Their excessive length hinders walking and stirs up the dust. However, the advantages outnumber the disadvantages, and the habits which have retained such a costume so long unchanged show a deep-rooted wisdom.

(3) *Health and Sickness*

291 The fellah's clothes are no more of a barrier against the elements than his work. They cut him off from neither air nor sun, earth nor water. This absorption into his environment gives him abundance of physical life. His robust
 142 and hardy constitution is in harmony with nature. For
 513 sleep he needs no mattress, no comfort. He bears the most
 151 brutal incisions without a cry. Colds, headaches and the foulest odours trouble him not at all. His appetite never fails, and his extremely sensitive hearing catches the slightest sound, human or other.

164 Very often, unfortunately, Nature turns treacherously upon him and infects his unsuspecting body with diseases which fatten and undermine him. These are endemic diseases which are rooted in the peasant class. Let us say nothing of tuberculosis or hereditary syphilis, which are the fellah's constant companions. Far more dangerous are bilharzia, ankylostomiasis (hookworm) and malaria, which in some *mudiriya*s affect more than 80% of the population.
 [515] These arise from lack of cleanliness, and too close a contact between man and the soil.

But the most noticeable are the eye-diseases. Though the greenness of the fields is restful to the sight, the heat and glare of the sun and still more the thick dust which no rain ever lays, the sandy wind from the hardby desert, the dung, the flies, and dirty fingers all combine from childhood to inflame and infect the eyes, if not to blind them. It is impossible to pass through a village without being struck by the number of blind and one-eyed people going about. According to statistics they amount to 60% of the population. In 1927 it was officially recorded that there were 266,550 one-eyed people and 110,000 completely blind. In 1937 the provinces of Minia and Assiut were credited with 50,000 either one-eyed or blind. In actual fact there are more than that. There is no counting the bleary or bloodshot looks, the eyes dimmed by glaucoma or trachoma.

Another scourge is *bilharzia* ("). This is a form of haematuria caused by a parasite which is absorbed into the system through the skin. The fellaheen make their ritual ablutions
 [515] daily, often side by side, in any sort of water, and work bare-
 744] foot on the damp earth or in the mud of the drains. The larva of this parasite, which is peculiar to Egypt, grows

up and is transmitted in water and sodden ground, in the stagnant village ponds, and, since the development of perennial irrigation, in the standing water of runnels and badly levelled canals.

Bilharzia is not in itself a serious disease. But, beginning with the passing of blood in the urine, it often develops, through lack of attention, into complications such as the stone, fistula, and ulceration of the penis. The infection may reach the kidneys, the liver and even the eyes. Above all, it lasts for 18 or 20 years. 90% of the male fellahen are affected by it and become accustomed to passing blood and feeling continually below par.

Bilharzia is transmitted through urine and water; hookworm through earth and excrement. Like bilharzia, hookworm is a collective disease, a permanent epidemic, and is introduced into the system by a parasite which passes through the skin. Ankylostomiasis is less widespread than bilharzia, but more dangerous, since it consumes the red corpuscles of the blood (").

As the fellahen never make use of human dung, and have never learnt the use of latrines, they relieve themselves no matter where. If they are already infected with the worm, every such place is a new source of danger to their fellows, who walk barefoot or lie down heedlessly on the ground. The worm can move several feet in the darkness; it settles in damp soil, whence it passes through the skin to the intestines.

You may see countless men and women in the prime of life who are stricken with this disease, their faces puffy and lifeless with its ravages. Neither their vigorous constitution, their youth, nor the treatment they receive has been able to save them.

Malaria, spread by the ricefields and birkas, affects 65% of the fellahen, and in some villages East of the Delta as many as 90%.

What makes these three diseases so alarming is not so much their inherent seriousness as their constantly widening extent, and the way in which the fellahen themselves by their work and their manner of life contribute unconsciously to the perpetuation of the evil. It should also be remarked that the Government's measures to combat these diseases have not as yet had very much effect.

743 Special hospitals have been established to fight against
744 the three diseases in every *bandar*, or provincial capital.
164 These, however, can only treat patients from the immediate
neighbourhood. It is difficult for others to leave their vil-
lages, in which there are no hospital facilities. If they all
went to the *markaz*, the Government doctor and his pharmacy
would be overwhelmed.

You may tell a sick man that he has no excuse. The towns are full of hospitals; there is free medicine at the dispensaries, and any number of doctors available.

"Yes", he will reply, "but there is no doctor in my village. And if there were, I could not afford to pay him any more than to buy medicine. As for going away to hospital, I cannot leave my wife and children. And how should I live while I am away? Where should I find money to pay for my food and lodging? I prefer to trust in Providence" (").

A friend of the author's who is an *omda* gives a different view. "In the old days a sick fellah had to ride for three hours on donkey-back to get to hospital, whatever his condition. Now we have built a free dispensary in the village itself. A doctor comes four times a week, and when he is away he can be called by telephone. In this way treatment has become easier."

759 If the fellaheen go to the barber for treatment (till
744 they die of it), this is because he is the only available practi-
743 tioner, just as the money-lender is the only available source
of loans. The proof is that, when the mobile medical services
arrive in a village, the fellaheen come eagerly for help and
submit with unflinching confidence to any sort of treatment.

743 Take for example the travelling hospital at Tahta. The
744 Ministry of Public Health rented a site for six months, and
164 tents were set up by the Department of Epidemic Diseases.
Everything was clean. Before the opening day a publicity
campaign was carried out in the surrounding villages, and
a ceremonial opening was arranged. One doctor and six
assistants were at the disposal of the patients, who were
treated free. The average attendance was eighty a day, of
whom twenty-five had hookworm and only three had bil-
harzia (this was Upper Egypt). But these splendid efforts
on the part of the Ministry of Public Health are no more
than a drop in the ocean. Unfortunately, the fellah's

own habits often neutralise the treatment he receives, so⁷⁴³ that these diseases remain as deep-rooted as ever in the⁷⁴⁴ peasant class. If only they would pay attention, until¹⁶⁴ more can be done, to the advice and directions which are given them! The answer is that even if they tried they could not hope to succeed, because the conditions under which they live are at every point unfavourable to the attempt. Here lies the heart of the problem.

(4) Food and Drink

Water is the first problem; not this time considered for²⁷¹ its use in irrigation, which has been studied over and over^[132] again, but as a much more vital need in supplying human nourishment. Egypt is a hot country, and the fellah's work makes him sweat, so that thirst affects him more than most other people.

Where the owner of an 'ezba has installed a pump, the²⁷¹ fellaheen may get their water from an artesian well. If³¹² their village is on the river bank, they will use water from the Nile, which is silty but fresh-running. But more often than not they can drink only brackish and stagnant water from the irrigation canals.

In these, men and animals cleanse and relieve them-^[296] selves; vegetables, clothes, and crockery are washed, and^[515] carrion is thrown away; and this is the place to which women^[364] come to get "drinking water". They bring it home in the early evening, in their ewers or tins, to fill up the great pot,²⁷¹ or zir, that stands against the house wall. Each fellah⁴¹⁵ brings back about six gallons each evening for the next day's use. This water she adds to what already remains in the zir, so that the bottom is never dry, and never cleaned. The water stands all night, so that some of the dirt settles. It also cools, owing to evaporation through the porous clay. As for the drops which filter through, and which might be used to fill the drinking-pots with pure water for the morning, they simply run to waste in puddles or are drunk by the fowls.

The Government, however, is busily studying the question of supplying drinking-water to the villages, and numerous plans have been made.

Men have always added something to water to give it a²⁷³ taste. The fellah is no exception. Wine he does not drink,

273 as it is forbidden by his religion; he is in any case too poor to pay for it, and his head could not stand it.

272 Coffee was introduced into Egypt at the end of the fifteenth century by the Sufis of Yemen. The fellah drinks very little of it, far less than the people of Cairo⁽⁴⁾. However, when he goes to the market he may sip a small cup or two while playing backgammon with his friends.

Since the war of 1914-18, exaggerated tea-drinking, after a fashion introduced from Tripoli, has taken the place of coffee-drinking, and has become the rule not only where menfolk meet together, but also in the home. Fellah families are accustomed to drink tea several times a day, and in considerable quantity. Not only the adults, but the smallest of the children, too, feel a need for tea. The fellah takes his teapot with him to the field. The poorest spend at least 30 piastres a month on tea and sugar. When they have not enough money to buy any, they lie flat on the ground, incapable of activity. "In one village", says Mgr Khousam, Bishop of Thebes, "I asked what had happened to the animals, which constitute the fellah's capital. There are none, they answered me. They have been sold to buy tea. Tea has become as much a necessity as bread."

By boiling the tea till it turns black, a thick, syrupy liquid is obtained, rich in tannin and alkaloids, which sooner or later ruins the stomach and the nerves, weakens the whole body, and debases the character. But it is comforting and brings forgetfulness.

[439] This black tea has become the drug of the fellah. Imports have tripled in a few years. The Government has [65] also raised the duty to three times its original figure, from two and a half piastres to seven, and then to eight and a half piastres a kilogramme, to put it out of the fellah's reach. But the evil has not diminished, for those who have acquired the habit will do without food and starve their families rather than give it up. On the contrary the increased tax has only hastened the ruin of the fellah and of his health.

Merchants mix tea-leaves scavenged from hotels, cafés, and ships, with sawdust, bean husks, and dry *molokhiya* or poplar leaves. This mixture, coloured and baked, they sell to the wretched fellaheen, when they cannot get tea by smuggling.

Paradoxical as it may seem, there appears to be a relation 272
between the increase in this "drug habit" and the develop- 312
ment of perennial irrigation. It has in fact been proved 164
that this invention, which has doubled Egypt's wealth, has
also encouraged bilharzia and ankylostomiasis. These dis-
eases weaken the fellah and reduce his power to work. He
seeks relief in the stimulant readiest to hand. As the men,
who spend their lives in mud and water, are more affected
by these diseases than the women, they are also more
addicted to this "black tea" (").

The cultivation of tobacco, which was brought into 249
Egypt at the beginning of the seventeenth century, was 439
forbidden by a decree of 25th June, 1890. Imported in 276
the raw state from Greece, Turkey and Japan, and processed
in Egypt, it is too dear for most of the fellaheen. As with
coffee, it is in much greater use in the towns (").

As a rule the fellaheen eat three meals a day; at sunrise 264
before leaving for work (*futûr*); about 10 o'clock, in the 516
field (*ghâda*); and at home at dusk (*asha*). The fellaheen
always sit cross-legged on the ground, and eat with their
fingers.

Those at work usually eat their lunch (*ghâda*) in the 415
open air and in company, each taking his food from the 271
plate or enamel pot his wife has brought him, while the
water bottle passes from hand to hand.

The chief meal is supper, which consists of warm cooked 252
food eaten with the family. Cooking is done with oil over a 372
Primus stove, or in a household oven fed with strawed cow-
dung (*gilla*).

The fellaheen do not go in for cattle-rearing, and as meat 262
is expensive they cannot eat much of it. They have mutton 231
or beef at most once a week, and at least on the two great
festivals, or when an animal is killed by accident. This
means an orgy, at which everyone puts away tremendous
helpings of food. Every now and again some rich man, 735
for a vow or a funeral, kills an ox or *gamoossa* and gives
away its meat; then the poorest can have a feast for nothing.

Those who live on the banks of the Nile, a large canal, 226
or a lake, use nets to catch small fish, which they cook in oil.
But most of them are limited to vegetables. Onions (*bassal*),
turnips (*lîf*), green peppers (*silîl*) and cucumbers (*kâshîr*) 262
are eaten raw. Vegetables which they cook are ladies' 252
fingers (*bâmîa*) and *molokhiya* (Jew's mallow) ("), both of

262 which the fellaheen enjoy immensely. Beans (*fal*) are the
252 national dish. Then there are little marrows (*kāsa*), and
finally lentils and rice, which are often mixed, one part to
two, to make *kushri*. This is their most effective concoction.

262 For dessert, when they have the opportunity, they eat
264 dates, or bite huge mouthfuls out of slices of water-melon.
They may also chew sugar cane, or gnaw maize roasted on
the cob.

Place and season afford a certain variety, but there is
no wide choice at any one time. The common meal always
consists of one dish, to which is often added a piece of *mish*,
a coarse, sour kind of cream cheese, made of goat's or *gamoos-*
sa's milk preserved in salt water, which is eaten from one end
of Egypt to the other.

[263] For flavouring the fellaheen use crude salt from Damietta,
and a kind of treacle made by boiling sugar-cane juice.
They rarely put manufactured salt or sugar in their ordinary
food. On the occasion of a wedding, circumcision, or *mālid*,
they buy plain cakes and red or green sweets, which they
find as toothsome as their children do.

262 The staple food of the fellah is his maize bread (*bellai*).
146 This provides 80% of the calories in his diet, and half the
proteins. A grown man will eat three pounds of it a day.
It has been calculated that this wholemeal bread contains
six times more magnesium than normal baker's bread(").

252 The grains of maize are not pounded in a mortar, as
412 millet is by the black peoples of Africa, but ground between
two millstones, after the manner used throughout the Near
East.

412 This primitive mill, found also in Morocco, consists of
462 two large flat stone wheels about two feet wide and three
362 inches thick. The one on the ground is fixed, while the upper
one turns on a pivot. It is pierced with a central eyelet,
into which the grain to be ground is poured. A wooden pin
set upright in a hole near the edge of the moveable wheel
serves as a turning handle. This grinding, like the other
processes of breadmaking, is done by the womenfolk.

232 The flour, with the addition of a little fenugreek (*helba*),
millet, corn or beans, is kneaded on a piece of wood into
round, flat cakes, about ten inches across. This dough,
cooked in the household oven, produces a golden brown
bread with a very pleasant taste, made of two soft crusts

with no crumb. There are no public bakeries except in the towns, but every family bakes its own bread two or three times a week. In Upper Egypt the fellah's loaf is rather smaller, being about six inches across, though thicker. A labourer in the district of Armant told the author that he used to eat ten a day. 252
[265]
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The ordinary food of the fellah, then, consists of bread, which he makes from maize of his own growing, and vegetables from the edge of his field, or others of poorer quality that his wife buys at the market, with the occasional addition of cheese, when not all the milk of the *gamoossa* has been sold. Briefly, he eats the cheapest products obtainable in the neighbourhood.

His diet is neither varied nor abundant. Does this mean that he is underfed? It is certainly the usual view. On the other hand, one authority (") finds that the foods—and even the water—which make up the fellah's diet contain a normal mineral content. The work, health and physical strength of the fellah seem to confirm this opinion, yet the increase of pellagra, and the very high proportion (perhaps 80%) of recruits for military service turned down, would seem to prove malnutrition. [64
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So the black soil, like the tongue in Aesop's proverb, is at once the best and the worst of things, giving the fellah both strength and sickness.

The mineral content of the food crops that it nourishes strengthens the men who eat them.

The germs and parasites which infect the sodden soil weaken the men who live on it and drink from it. [64]

From this interplay of natural forces, in spite of everything, a certain balance has been set up which has made the fellaheen a sturdy stock.

This is what justifies the view that the fellah's greatest affliction does not lie in lack of cleanliness, in disease, high mortality, or all the physical distress so far described, and to be further studied under the heading of housing. His real misery lies elsewhere. 164
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CHAPTER VI

THE VILLAGE AND THE PEASANT COMMUNITY

571 The fellah should always be spoken of in the plural, because he lives always as a member of a group, if not of a crowd. In the fields, as tenant or owner, he works with his wife and children; as a hired labourer, he works in a gang, swinging the *fass* or sowing seed in a concerted rhythm.

Limited as the fellah's horizon may be within the village, he works in the open air and in public more often than in the privacy of his house. The women go in groups to draw water, the children play in swarms, daily life is collective and communal. But to understand the village community, it is necessary first of all to look at the village.

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137 Seen from outside, as it stands up in the middle of the plain or against the pale background of the desert cliffs, it is a huddled earthy mass, compact but shapeless, and crowned with bundles of brushwood. A whitewashed building, more important than the rest — perhaps a great pigeon-cote or the house of a notable — stands out from the confusion. Palms or acacias, sycamores or *lebbekhs* rise above the mass and relieve its drabness. In the bright light of Egypt these grouped or scattered trees around or in amongst the houses give a fine effect, and Brunhes has devoted a whole page to the picture in his *Géographie Humaine*. It is not for us to imitate him. We must pierce behind this magic veil, which is all that most observers can see, and probe the reality.

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133 As the villages date from before the period of flood-control, few of them are actually on the Nile banks. Most stand back, at distances from a hundred yards to half a mile away. Others straggle along the edge of the Upper Egyptian desert, or stand huddled on a *kôm* or *tell*, that is to say the ruins of an ancient village or an artificial mound or dyke. In districts where the Nile flood is no longer to

be feared. the village may stand on the level of the fields, ³⁶¹
barely visible, though always very compact. ¹³³

A village may be situated anywhere. There is always water near, the soil and the contour of the land scarcely vary, so that the geographer cannot lay down hard and fast rules in explanation. History might have something to say on the subject, but who will ever know the past of those four thousand villages scattered far and wide along the Nile Valley? Their congestion, however, can be explained.

Not a square inch of ground must be wasted, especially ³¹¹
if it is rich and well watered. In order to keep the cultivated ³⁶¹
area as large as possible, the unproductive space covered by ⁴²³
human dwellings is reduced to a minimum. As we have
seen, up to the nineteenth century the land and its cultivators
belonged to the State and a few big landowners. The fel-
lahen had no interest in living on isolated farmsteads, all ⁷²¹
the more so because in that troubled period plundering ⁶⁸⁵
Arabs or highway robbers would soon have despoiled them.

Moreover the village was the official unit for taxes, re- ⁶²¹
cruiting, judicial enquiries and the survey, so that it was ⁶⁵¹
essential for the villagers to remain within it. For these ⁶⁵⁶
reasons, which still hold good today, the Government would
not allow them to settle outside the village area.

These motives are now reinforced by certain new factors, ³⁶¹
such as the increase of population, the high price of land, and ¹⁶¹
lack of space. The 1907 survey fixed the boundaries of the
village areas once and for all.

A village may contain anything from a few hundred to ³⁶¹
several thousand inhabitants — 15,000 is not an uncommon
figure — but it will always seem no more than one large
family. Nothing is more like one Egyptian village than
another Egyptian village. Here is another example of the
monotonous uniformity which we have so often had cause
to mention. There is a difference between the villages of
Upper and Lower Egypt, as there is between the fellahen
of the two regions, but the likeness between them is far more
striking. If an Egyptian of the older generation is shown
photographs of several villages and asked whether they
belong to Upper Egypt or the Delta, he will frequently give the
wrong answer.

This is because the same kind of people and the same
manner of life make for the same sort of villages. When

F they build themselves a suburb on the outskirts of a town,
361 as at Minia for example, it bears exactly the same appearance.

Some distinction may be made between villages according to their relative importance. There are the district capitals (*markaz*), the market towns and the centres of pilgrimage; these are big villages or townlets with more business, more movement and more institutions than the others (bank, court, police station, railway station); but no fellah centre has many of the amenities of a town. At the other end of the scale come detached but still dependent hamlets, such as the 'ezbas of the big landowners and the Bedouin settlements (*nag'*) on the edges of the cultivation.

F The standard of living is practically invariable every-
511 where, and to study an average village is to know all the rest.

184 Let us choose a village at random and look, before we enter it, for any signs of communal life which can be seen from its outskirts.

F In Europe it is often said that the church building gives
361 its character to the village. In Egypt too the mosque (or
346 the Coptic church) is the largest and most solid building, but there is nothing remarkable about it in point of architecture. Even if it has a minaret or a bell-tower, it gives no special character to the village, for it rarely rises above the poverty and mediocrity of its surroundings.

C 95% of the fellaheen are Moslems. There are about a
F 779 million Copts, 40,000 of whom are Catholics. They live together with the Moslems in the same villages, each group following its own faith.

F The Moslem fellaheen, among whom neither women nor
779 children are counted, observe as faithfully as possible the
771 five fundamental precepts of the Koran: belief in one God, prayer, fasting, almsgiving and the pilgrimage. This much at least they know.

F Of their belief in God something will be said later on.
782 Prayers they say after ablutions in the evening, and several
796 times on Friday. When they hear the call of the *muezzin*,
516 they leave the women and children in the fields, and go off to the mosque, or more often to a cleared space used as such, a square of beaten earth at the water's edge surrounded by a low wall. There they pray together, or at least go through the prescribed gestures. Squatting on the ground or on

a mat, they listen to the *maazna*, or preacher, as he reads them a chapter from the Koran. F
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On Sundays the Christian fellaheen attend the interminable Coptic mass. But here worship is more of a family affair, and women take part in the prayers and chants. F
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The Moslems do not understand the literary dialect of the Koran, neither do the Christians understand the Coptic language of their mass. All the fellaheen from one end of Egypt to the other speak what is called 'the vulgar tongue', i.e. colloquial Arabic. This is a dialect differing a great deal in its vocabulary from those of Syria and Morocco. In Egypt there is no distinct dialect in this or that province, but only a number of variant words and expressions, and, in the South, a more guttural pronunciation, which betrays the Upper Egyptian. C
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Fasting is strictly observed by the Moslems in Ramadan and by the Copts in Lent. The former during the holy month abstain from all eating and drinking from dawn to sunset. The latter, for about two hundred days of the year, eat nothing from midnight to midday. F
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Almsgiving is another obligation which the fellaheen do not neglect. Within the limits of their means they fulfil it ungrudgingly, not in money but in kind. They make gifts to the blind, to ministers of religion, and to those poorer than themselves; and this in addition to regular and compulsory presents. F
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On the other hand, few fellaheen make the pilgrimage to Mecca, and if they do, it is at the price of heroic sufferings. The happy pilgrim, on his return after six or eight months' absence, bringing blessings from the holy places to his village, is welcomed like one coming back from the dead. His pious achievement marks him out from the rest, and his children share his renown. He is henceforward always addressed by the title of "*Hagg*" and his pilgrimage is commemorated on the walls of his house. On the white-washed front the crude outlines of men, carriages and ships are painted, with his name and the date. The same customs are observed by Coptic fellaheen who have visited Jerusalem, and thus earned the titled of "*Mugaddis*". C
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More frequented and more popular than the mosque, because there is no distinction of age or sex, is the tomb of F
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778 the patron saint of the village, who is called 'Sheikh' or 'Wali' or 'Sidi' So-and-So.

The monument usually stands outside the built-up area, often close to a well or a canal and shaded by trees, which are themselves the objects of veneration. It consists as a rule of a cubical building about twenty feet square, topped by a dome (*qubba*), and whitewashed all over. The sheikh's body does not always lie within. There may be only [782] an empty tomb surrounded by palm branches, candles, shreds of cloth, bits of hair, and harvest offerings. The caretaker of the tomb is maintained by the community, or by the income of a pious foundation (*wagf*). His post is often hereditary.

796 The day of the *mulid*, or anniversary of the holy man,
527 is a great holiday for the villagers. All of them make their way to the holy spot and go through the traditional ceremonies — dances, circuit of the tomb, and incantations ('').

764 The resting-place of the dead is some distance from the homes of the living. The cemetery is always a piece of waste land, unfit for cultivation, on the débris of an abandoned village (*tell* or *kom*), or on the sand below the cliffs at the desert edge. Sometimes, as at Minia, it lies on the other side of the Nile. The village of the dead is made up of separate tombs packed closely one against the other. They may be rectangular cemented blocks with pillars at head and foot, or simply mounds sprinkled all over with white pebbles or marked by two rough stones or a couple of vertical palm branches which are renewed every year. There are no inscriptions and no flowers, but every family knows where its [769] dead are buried, and comes to visit them on the first day of the Great Bairam, when the whole village goes off to the cemetery to honour the dead and to feast and make holiday [527] over their tombs. On that day the village is as empty and deserted as it is in October, when everyone has gone out to pick the cotton.

361 It is not yet time for us to go inside the village. In
312 artists' pictures of Egyptian villages there is always a pool
311 to reflect the dull mass of houses with its coronet of trees.
316 In reality this pool is a large greenish pond of stagnant water, as poisonous as it is picturesque. Nearly every village has one, almost out of necessity. To build houses, make bricks, engineer a watercourse or strengthen a dyke, local

material is used, that is to say the nearest available earth. 311
Thus large holes have been created, which have been dug 312
deeper and wider, and have then filled up with water. These 361
are the *birkas* or village ponds, which serve as drinking- [515
troughs for animals, as swimming-pools for children, and 481]
sometimes as sources of water for the housewife.

The Government has had fifty-odd of these hotbeds of 164
disease filled in, not without meeting opposition from the 657
fellaheen, whose habits and customs have thus been disturbed.
Eighteen such ponds needed 10,000 cubic metres of earth.

Not far from the *birka*, still outside the village, is the 243
gurn, or winnowing and threshing-floor. This is a flat 251
patch of ground covered with cow-dung and earth, which has
been levelled and trodden down. Its size is proportionate
to the number of families that use it. The *gurn* is common
property, and nobody can appropriate it. It is big enough
for ten groups to work at a time, until all have winnowed
their corn. It also serves as a public square for meetings,
though often an adjacent piece of waste ground supplements
it for this purpose. Not far away can be seen a great rubbish 364
heap made of dirt, dung and carrion. This heap would over- 744
top the houses, if the dogs and birds of prey did not come
regularly to reduce it, and if the fellaheen did not take manure
from it. It would be an even greater danger to public
health than the *birka*, if the sun did not disinfect it.

Still outside the village, particularly in the Fayum 231
and in Middle Egypt, there may be square towers, as much as 343
thirty feet high, banded in black and white. Their heavy
base, seven yards by four, gives them the appearance of forts,
but they are in fact pigeon-cotes. You can see them assailed,
at sunset, each by a cloud of from fifteen to twenty thousand
pigeons coming back to roost after feeding among the fields.
The construction of these "houses", requiring an outlay of
from L.E. 200 to L.E. 300 each, is a specialised trade. It is
beyond the means of our fellaheen, and can be undertaken
only by an *omda* or big landowner. In the South a pigeon-
cote is often built on a corner of the rooftop, thus raising the
skyline of the village; but as a rule these houses with pigeon-
cotes, whether built-on or independent, do not form part of
the village itself. They stand apart, and can be distinguished
by their extra storey, their more pretentious appearance,
and their gardens. Such are the owner's villa on an *ezba*, or

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343 in bigger villages the house of a notable or a successful merchant.

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343 Within easy reach of the village on the side facing the fields are the *shoonas* or *depôts* for storing crops, together with offices and officials' houses, and the *ilzamiya* or compulsory school.

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485 Now let us go inside the village. In a clean and accessible corner, better cared for than all the other houses, there may be sometimes a "rest-house" or *madyafa* of two or three rooms, kept by the *omda* for the use of Government officials and travellers. This building belongs either to the Irrigation Department or to the Ministry of the Interior. There are Government rest-houses in about 400 villages.

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363 Let us penetrate to the heart of the little town. What we have seen up to now has given us no idea of what to expect. All is dust and disorder. There is no plan or system, and not a single straight line. The only thing in common with a modern city is the congestion due to lack of building space. The alleys, strewn with dung and rubbish, are so narrow that three people cannot walk abreast; they are less than two yards wide. There is no hope of driving through, and hardly of riding through on donkey-back. However, in some places where there is more movement, the buildings are of necessity less crowded, as in front of the *omda's* house or the school, and in the business quarter, which [346] contains the little open shops of the tailor, the grocer, the [366] potter, and the weaver, and, if the village is large enough, a café. There are many villages without a single shop, so that it is impossible to buy anything at all, except from an [443] occasional pedlar. In some villages the system of barter is still in use, corn, for example, being exchanged for salt.

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No main road ever goes through a village as in England or France. The hamlet is a compact mass of buildings, standing aside from the road, canal or river; wheeled vehicles cannot enter it. That is why so few foreigners, missionaries and, indeed, well-to-do Egyptians except the '*omda* and the *sarraf*', know anything of its inner life. To get a picture of this, we must first describe the leading characters.

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443 We have already met the '*omda* and the *sarraf*', who link the fellah to the Government, and the *nazir*, his link with the landowner. Another connection with the civilised world is [563] provided by the *baqqal*, often a Greek, who performs the

functions of grocer and druggist, café-keeper and innkeeper.⁴⁴³
 money-lender and banker. He is the most Egyptianised⁵⁶³
 of Europeans. He has no objection to living right in the
 village, among the fellahen if not with them, and on them if
 not for them. He has brought into this closed world the
 gramophone and the games of the West. He robs the fella-
 heen and teaches them the use of narcotics, but he is un-^[276]
 failingly obliging. Though his rates are exorbitant, he will
 lend money on request without asking too many questions.⁴²⁹
 He sells on credit, and when he buys he pays cash. The
 fellahen appreciate his resourcefulness and enterprise.

Other less important but more popular figures stand out
 from the mass by virtue of some well-defined social functions
 long sanctified by custom.

First comes the *mizayen* or barber-surgeon. He is a very⁷⁵⁹
 busy man. He shaves all the fellahen of his district once⁴⁶³
 a month, and crops their hair. Squatting in front of his³⁰²
 client, who also squats, he takes a dish of water between
 his knees, and an old razor between finger and thumb, and
 quickly tidies up the face and head. An aching tooth? He
 will pull it out. Cupping, scarification, purge? No difficulty^[516]
 at all. He is responsible for public health, and therefore^[751]
 performs vaccinations, and notifies deaths to the 'omda.
 The *mizayen* also officiates at circumcisions, and on the eve
 of this operation, or of a wedding, the hair-cutting takes on^[304]
 something of a ritual significance. He surrounds it with
 ceremony, and in so doing dignifies his art. For his varied
 services he is paid either in kind at harvest time or in^[465]
 milliemmes.

The magician or sorcerer, with his charms, his formulae,⁷⁵⁴
 his perfumed sachets and his magic remedies, would be a⁷⁵⁶
 serious rival to the *mizayen*, were it not that his credulous⁷⁹¹
 customers are chiefly women. He may live in the village
 or merely pass through. It is to him that the country women
 have recourse in order to get the help of jinns, to cast
 spells, to counteract the evil eye or to ensure conception.
 No-one can make them believe that this holy man is just
 a rascal and an impostor. The more magic babble he puts
 into his rites, the more confidence they place in him. In-
 deed there are many instances in which trickery is not a suf-
 ficient explanation for the effects produced. A whole book⁷⁵⁴
 might be written on witchcraft in the village, and its affinity

754 with the pre-Islamic and pre-Christian magic of Ancient Egypt.⁽¹¹⁾

This affinity is confirmed by the faith of the fellahen in everything that represents itself to be ancient, primitive, *qadim*. For many of their superstitious beliefs they can give no other reason. Why is a Coptic monk preferred as a sorcerer? Why should the touching of ancient statues make a woman conceive? Why should a pebble or written charm from the sorcerer give effect to a wish? Because it is *qadim*. Because it holds in itself the power of the past.

764 The function of women mourners is also traditional. A
[765] fellah dies. At once loud cries from the womenfolk announce it to all the neighbourhood. The common bier is fetched from its place near the *gurn* outside the village. Women wash the body in warm water within the house, while outside rise the wailings of the mourning women.

In their funeral cries they boast of the beauty and fine qualities of the departed, they reproach God for taking him, they call to the dead man, to his wife and children, they cry out to Death itself. These complaints seem natural and improvised. In fact they are no more so than the tears of the professional mourners, wrapped in great veils (*milayas*) [767] specially for this ceremony, their face coloured black or blue [535] as a sign of mourning, their heads sprinkled with mud. Leading the womenfolk in a ghastly dance, they rise, clap their hands, sway about and fall exhausted, now slackening, now hurrying their cries. Here the women take first place. The men put in an appearance, both at the funeral and on the visit of sympathy, for death is a part of public life. But they participate only by their presence; they say nothing. In silence they follow the bier, clasp the hand of the nearest relation, stay seated for some time by the dead man's house, and make their way home again⁽¹²⁾.

533 Other occasions, less frequent but more joyful, bring the
538 fellahen together for music and story-telling. The man who brings them these hours of pleasure is the *sha'ir*, reciter, storyteller and singer all in one. He is himself a fellah, but an exceptionally gifted one. It is his melodious voice that has singled him out for the musician's life, but he also ac-
[539] companies himself on the *rebaba*, a single-stringed, sharp-toned violin. He will sing the praises of Mohammed or Jesus, describing the Prophet's appearance in naive, highly-

coloured language. More often he will relate the exploits of Abu Zeid el-Hilali and his companions, and the loneliness of his wife 'Aliya, the prowess of 'Antar, or the pleasures of the flesh. Many of these improbable stories contain a core of historical truth, and recall those to which the peasants listened under the Pharaohs. (27)

The audience listens enraptured, greeting every point with "Allah! Allah!" or beating time in rhythmic applause to the song. When enthusiasm reaches its peak, caps are torn off and flung into the air. Then the story has to be begun again.

For important occasions such as a wedding, the reception of a public figure, or the eve of a *milid*, a band of musicians adds its support.

The players are untrained, their tunes are simple and obvious, and their orchestration is monotonous, if not discordant. They either improvise variations or play some well-known refrain from memory. Their instruments are the *mizmar*, a shrill-toned bagpipe, the *sussars*, a reed flute, single or double, together with the *urghul* and *salamiya*, which are plucked with the fingers. The music is supported by beating either the *tabl*, a large shallow drum, or the *darbuka*, a kind of tambourine made of a piece of donkeyskin stretched over the mouth of an earthen funnel about a foot wide. All these instruments are of local make, and there is no peasant festivity at which they cannot be heard.

The crowd is even denser when other attractions find a place in the programme. There may be jugglers, performing monkeys, or snake-charmers, or perhaps a sham duel between two fellahs who swing their staves (*sabds*) this way and that in attack and defence.

Belly dances, puppet shows, and pantomimes (*khawwal*) may still sometimes be found.

These entertainments are usually held on the *gura* and the neighbouring space, or near the Sheikh's tomb on the day of his *milid*. They reach the grand scale at those district pilgrimages that annually attract tens of thousands of fellahs to commemorate, if not to pray to, the holy "patron" on the presumed site of his life and death. There is El-Sayyid El-Bedawi at Tanta, Sidi Abdel Raheem at Qena, Al-Imam Al-Shafai at Old Cairo, and for the Copts Sitti Damiyana, Marie Girgis, and others. (28)

527 Sometimes, as at Shemm el Nassim^(*), the feast of Spring, the faithful of both religions mingle in the same holiday and the same rejoicings. The ceremonies may last several days. Formless processions pass, with banners floating in the wind. Arabs come to show off their horsemanship; swings and roundabouts are set up for the children. A thousand booths are arranged in the open air, for the sale of sugar dolls, sweet sesame, roast peas and monkey nuts^(*). The crowd laughs, sings, and makes merry, spending in a single day the savings of a whole year and living only for the moment.

443 At the market too there is a crowd. The market is a
437 piece of waste land, sometimes enclosed, outside the bigger villages. The Egyptian Markets Company has established 123 country markets, which may be recognised by their iron railings, in such towns as Mehalla, Embaba, and Tahta. They take a toll of one or two piastres from each seller.

The market is usually held once a week and lasts from dawn to midday. The sellers, men and women, make their way to it at daybreak in long files, choose a spot to lay out their wares, and squat down behind them to wait for customers. Buyers soon appear from all the surrounding villages, and then all is a noisy, confused *mêlée* of men, cattle and goods.

Piece-goods and hardware are sold by professional merchants who come from the chief town or are going the round of the villages. These merchants get their stock from the wholesalers in the cities. But vegetables, poultry, butter and eggs are sold by the fellah himself, or rather by the fellah's wife, who is a better hand at bargaining. When forced to do so, the fellah brings his *gamoossa* or goat to the market for sale.

432 The buyers are other fellaheen who need manufactured
435 goods or foodstuffs which they cannot produce themselves. For two piastres they can replace a broken waterpot (*ballas*) or a worn-out basket. Eight piastres will buy a big pair of drawers, and five a shirt. A *gallabiya* may be had for twenty piastres, and for thirty a *milaya*, or woman's veil. Better qualities are on sale for the *'omda* or for a villager who has done good business. A *gallabiya* or a *milaya* worth 100 piastres — that is something for a man or woman to be proud of.

104 [10. (54). - Analyst]

Provisions also have to be bought, according to need, ⁴³² opportunity and means. Here are a few prices, the first ⁴³⁵ column representing pre-war prices, the second those of 1943.

Meat	Pro-war	1943
Beef, per oke	P.T. 8	P.T. 20
Mutton, " " " " " "	" 12	" 30
Kerosene for lamps or stove		
18-litre tin	P.T. 10-11	P.T. 20
1 litre	7 mills.	12 mills.
Cotton-seed oil for cooking, per oke	P.T. 6-	P.T. 10
Tea, per oke	" 25	" 80
Sugar, per oke	" 3 1/2	" 6
Coffee, per rotl	" 5	" 11
Cigarettes, per box of 20	" 2 or 3	" 4

Farm produce is bought by the local *bourgeois* or by agents, who send it elsewhere. Prices in the village market run as follows :—

	Pre-war	1943
Chickens, per pair	P.T. 8-15	P.T. 40
Eggs, per dozen	" 1 1/2- 3	" 6
Clarified butter (<i>sams</i>), per oke	" 12-16	" 36
Rice, per oke	" 2- 3	" 3 1/2
Lentils, per oke	" 2- 3	" 5

Cereals and cotton are bought up by middlemen, or ⁴³⁵ by agents of the big firms in Cairo and Alexandria. The ⁴⁴³ prices vary a good deal. A *caslar* of cotton may sell at 300-550 piastres, according to the quality of the staple, the rate of exchange, or the impatience of the fellah. The small merchant buys a *rotl* of cotton from the gleaners for 7 milliemmes, and sells a *caslar* at 252 piastres. An *ardeb* of corn (about 150 kilograms) will sell for 110-140 piastres, the price varying as before with the quality and quantity. For other goods the variation is less. The prices are lower or higher according to the distance of the market from the Nile, the season of the year and the fluctuations of supply and demand. For some classes of goods the price has hardly changed for thirty years. It still sometimes happens in the villages that more than one fourth of the business is done by barter, but the use of money is becoming more and more the rule.

437 At last business is over. Before sundown, after interminable parleyings, the fellah goes home with goods or money calculated to increase his well-being, or at least with pleasant memories of a day full of sights and sounds.

444 Pilgrimages and markets swell the traffic on the country
571 roads. Here again can be seen the love of the fellahs for crowding together and moving only in congested groups.

484 If they have to cross the Nile or a canal to reach the village opposite, the fellahs throng so densely into the ferry-boat or raft (*ma'adiya*) that accidents are frequent.
[505] When they set out on foot or on donkey-back, laden with
[292] astonishing bundles, it looks like an evacuation. When for
444 a long journey they take the *trombil* or *halazons* — an old Ford converted into a bus — forty of them push their way in where there is room for only twenty, and they take it very ill if police regulations are enforced. One of the reasons for a certain minister's unpopularity in the country was his insistence on applying these regulations. When they have
[497] to travel by train, they arrive several hours beforehand, cluster on a corner of the platform, and scramble all together into one carriage, even if there is plenty of room elsewhere.

In general, then, the fellahs like being together, out of doors and in crowds. They are sociable people. But does this mean that they are socially minded? Is there any organic relationship between the members of the peasant group?

361 Let us first of all consider the village as a whole. This
181 with its surrounding land forms a closed system outside which everyone and everything is foreign and unknown. It leads a secluded and individual life, which is organized from within by habits, customs and taboos handed down from the distant past, immemorial laws which rule absolutely the acts and the pleasures of every inhabitant.

181 The fellah finds the same difficulty in widening his out-
619 look in space as in projecting himself into the future and practising foresight. His village is all in all, for it is here and now. It is his country, and the limit of his patriotism.

When a fellah is asked about his nationality, he will reply: "I am from the village of Manfaloot, or Abu Korkas", and occasionally, a little more widely: "I am from the Mudiriya of Menufiya, or Assiut", but rarely, if ever, "I

am an Egyptian". Though far more truly an Egyptian than 181
most political figures, he is unconscious of belonging to a 619
nation. This explains why, in the nationalist movement
which swept over Egypt after the end of the first Great War
until she obtained independence, the world of the fellahen
took no part. Nation, liberty, politics, these are words
and notions beyond their understanding.

During the first Great War the English recruited a native 702
contingent, the Labour Corps, to defend Egypt from the 464
Turkish attack on the Suez Canal. These "volunteers" had to 619
be enlisted by force, with even more difficulty than for other
forced labour. The same lack of patriotism explains the
distaste of the fellahen for military service. The 24,000
soldiers of the Egyptian Army are almost all recruited from
among them. In practice the law of 1902 does not apply in
all its rigour except to them. Government officials and
their sons; only sons, eldest sons whose fathers are dead,
helpless, or over sixty; students; ministers of religion;
and invalids are all exempt.

A man liable to service is at the mercy of the lot between 702
the ages of 19 and 27. When the lot falls on him he is en- [66]
listed for five years. To ensure his rejection he may put out
one of his eyes, or cut off a couple of fingers. He will get into
debt to buy himself off from military service, or register as
a student. If he can, he will hide or escape. As many as
35% of the recruits shirk their service.

When there is no way out, and he cannot avoid leaving
home to join the army, the family receives condolences and [152]
abandons itself to mourning as if for a bereavement. To
leave the village is like going abroad. *Partir, c'est mourir*.
"Enlistment in the army is the passport to town life. Every-
thing in the countryside grieves and protests — ox, plough,
aspia, *gasmooon* and all" (Guindi).

The conscript will be sadly missed on the land. It is 702
not surprising that the fellahen prefer to pay twenty or even 426
a hundred pounds to avoid service, even if they are to be
burdened with debt for a very long time.

This is not to say that they make bad soldiers. The 702
fellahen are men that know how to handle a gun, and
the victorious armies of Mohamed Aly and Ibrahim Pasha
were composed of them. That is ancient history, but it

702 proves the capacities of the fellah. Here again the question of education comes in.

Nowadays the resistance to enlistment should be growing less. The men are better treated. When they leave the [554] army, in decent clothes, after five years of service under military discipline, they have lost their uncouthness and become *effendis*, gentlemen.

152 When a fellah is in barracks, or when he has taken
186 up work in a town so as to make a little money, he never forgets his native village, and homesickness shows on his stolid face. He tries at least to keep up contact with home and to retain some of its habits. Many a time the author [702] has written letters at the dictation of these illiterate peasants, [123] who hate being uprooted. It is always the same story: "Tell me how the crops are getting on. Give my best wishes to So-and-so, and to So-and-so".

621 If the vital interests of a village are in immediate
136 danger, each villager feels a strong sense of unity with the group; men, women, and children unite in a single force. Witness the dramatic affair of Abu Shady in 1936. As part of a scheme to reorganise the drainage the Irrigation [579] Department had decided to cut off a canal that had watered [186] the whole district for thirty years. The entire population rose against the labourers, against the police, even against the military, to prevent the diversion of the water. They held out against all these forces for several days. The women stood in the front line to urge on the men, the children provided a supply of missiles, and a regular strategy was improvised.

421 When a moneylender, a landowner, or a *admir* has carried
482 his exactions too far, and is killed with public approval, the finest sleuth cannot discover the murderer, so close is the [609] conspiracy of silence. Should one village, or even a few [579] people belonging to it, insult or injure the next, the inhabitants of the latter show a united front and avenge the insult with stones, clubs or guns (for many fellahs possess these forbidden arms. Thanks, however, to the intervention of the police, these village wars are becoming less common, though private feuds are still as frequent, as fierce, and as sudden as ever (**).

476 Here is one of the contradictions of fellah life. In the
577 village everybody knows everybody else, and no-one would

ever be allowed to die of hunger. The mutual help of the men in field-work and of the women in housework, the more readily given as poverty is greater, deserves every commendation. The way in which the fellahen will work to accomplish something in the common interest, when they are not under orders, shows what they are capable of. Yet when land, a woman, or an 'omda is in question, rival parties are established and the feud is kept up in every family from generation to generation. Everyone in the village has to take sides. Neutrals are despised. The antagonism, though usually latent, will show itself suddenly over some trivial matter, such as the shifting of a boundary mark, a theft of manure, or a gamoossa trespassing. Then human life counts for nothing, and death takes a holiday, especially in villages where there is Arab blood in the fellah's veins. ⁴⁷⁶₅₇₇ ⁵⁷⁸₅₇₉ [485]

Thus life is lived in constant insecurity. To feel this, one must spend a night in a village. As soon as night falls precautions are taken against a possible foe. The cattle, including the camel if there is one, are brought indoors and shut in the house. The family also take refuge together behind the great closed door. The head of the house often stays outside watching his field or his water, for the enemy is always on the prowl. As the shadows deepen, the dogs begin to bark and gunshots become frequent. ⁶⁰⁹

The shots come not only from the unsleeping watchman, trying to reassure himself and everyone else, but also from the fellahen armed going in defiance of the law. During harvest the fellahen become even more suspicious, and may be seen with a rifle slung over their shoulders as they stand with their feet in water to gather the last tufts of cotton. ¹⁵²₁₈₁ ⁴¹¹

In May 1936 the village of Qalandol was divided into two camps over the selection of an 'omda — the friends of Mahmud Bakr on the one side, and those of Aly Abbas on the other. Mahmud Bakr made some slanderous remarks about his opponent, and one morning his son was found dead in the fields. A few days later the sister of Aly Abbas was stabbed as a reprisal. After that, for a whole year, both sides watched and waited. Neither work nor journeys were undertaken alone, but always in groups. One market day, when crowds of fellahen had come from villages near, a young man of the party of Mahmud Bakr was insulted by an opponent, whom he struck. At once the supporters of Aly Abbas ⁵⁷⁸₆₂₂ ⁶⁶⁶₆₈₃ ⁶⁸³₅₇₉

683 rushed upon the young man. He fell, pierced by several
579 knife wounds. Bakr's men, as soon as they heard of the
crime, bore down on the spot with rifles and staves, crying
"Allah, Allah!". The others replied with the same cries,
and the battle began in earnest. An hour later there were
three dead and many wounded. By midnight the two parties,
determined to fight to the death, had taken up positions in
the hills. The police had the greatest difficulty in restoring
order.

186 Race hatred between Arab and fellah, and religious hatred
779 between Copt and Moslem, though lulled by common lives
and interests, are never completely extinguished, and furnish
the explanation of many a drama.

571 So trust and mistrust persist side by side. The main
181 source of both is the soil, which unites the fellahen if it is
186 threatened, but divides them as they own or covet it. Thus
[21] the peasant group, united against the outside world, is
divided within itself. Patriotism and nationality mean no
more to the fellahen than the ideas of co-operation, public
interest, or civic pride. The village in Egypt is not a com-
munity in the social sense; it is not an organism, but a mass.

Similarity in their mode of life, and propinquity, do
not necessarily create a deep relationship among human be-
ings. A certain spiritual life is needed, or at least a certain
personality, to make social relations possible. The fellah
appears to be as little of a personality as he is of an in-
dividual. Absorbed in the soil, and oppressed by those above
him, he lives collectively but not socially. Though living in
a herd, he remains solitary and aloof.

This absence of co-ordination among elements in them-
selves homogeneous has kept the Egyptian village, the typical
peasant group, in the primitive state of a conglomeration
lacking either material or intellectual system. Through
fifty centuries Government after Government has main-
tained this formlessness, as it greatly strengthens the central
authority.

Such are the common features of the fellahen, and of the
14,000 places in which they live (").

CHAPTER VII

THE FELLAH AT HOME

On his return from the East in 1932, Christian de Caters³⁴² spoke as follows about the houses of the fellahcen (*Echo de*⁵¹¹ Paris, 16.6.32): "I have seen the poorest villages of a⁷³⁵ Mancha in Spain, the hovels of the Cape Verde islanders,¹⁷¹ and the reed huts of the Lundas, a savage tribe in the depths of Angola, but nowhere have I seen greater distress than in Egypt."

On the other hand, Lozach, in *Le Delta du Nil* (Cairo, 1935), finds that the fellah's home is "not far behind the stone or mud huts with a thatched roof which are still common in many parts of Central and Western Europe. It is in any case far superior to the miserable hovels in which most of the peasants of Tunisia or Algeria live".

Which statement is one to believe? It all depends on the point of view and the standard of reference. Such comparisons are in all probability misleading, especially when the cases compared are not parallel. A personal impression or opinion is not so useful as an actual description of the fellah's home, and of his life in it. This will show us how far the house is suited not merely to the fellah but also to the land he works on.

We have seen the public parts of the village. Let us³⁴² look now at the private dwellings of the fellahcen, without concerning ourselves with the big house belonging to the landowner or the residence of the *omda*.

There are certain exceptions to be noticed first: —

1. Stone houses, which are found on the edges of the desert in Upper Egypt. The nearness of the cliffs makes it possible for the fellah to transport the stones for building in his basket. Some of these houses have a vaulted or domed roof.

2. Red-brick houses, without pointing, which are quite common in Lower Egypt. These presuppose a certain standard of living.

342 3. Houses of regular design on the model 'ezbas', such as those of the Royal Domains, the Agricultural Society, and a few individual landowners.

4. Shapeless huts made by newcomers and semi-nomads out of rags, empty petrol tins, palm leaves and mud.

5. Fieldshelters (*zarbiya*): huts built of reeds, or mere screens of maize stalks set in the open country during the period of heavy winter work.

But these, as has been said, are exceptions; the typical fellah house, representing 92% of the total, is of earth. It is a dwelling without style or age, which is yet one more sign of the persistent uniformity of the Egyptian peasantry.

361 Let us walk into one of the alleys that wind through
342 the clustered village. On each side the narrow dun-coloured
363 houses stand wall to wall. They may be from five to ten
362 metres wide, and about two and a half metres high, or at the most five if there is an upper storey. The quarter is old, and the village older still, but the house itself is comparatively new. This is because the materials and the methods of construction make the building impermanent. Fires, and in Lower Egypt the Nile flood and the rain, have necessitated constant repairs, which soon leave little of the original structure.

181 The dwelling of the fellah, like his work, derives its character from the soil, the manner of his life, and the social environment. The fellah is housed by the same earth that feeds him. He is a man of the soil in the true sense of the word. Here it is true that matter determines form.

333 The staple building-material is a mixture of clayey soil,
331 straw (from barley, beans, or flax), cow-dung, and Nile water.
342 This may be smeared over both sides of a rough framework of maize stalks, palm leaves, or reeds, to make the mud walls of the poorest type of house. It may be poured into wooden moulds to make crude bricks (*tâb alâdar*), which are dried in the sun and then used for building. The mortar used to join them is made of the same simple mixture, and so is the plaster which sometimes covers and protects the walls.

A wall so constructed, to be strong enough, must be from twelve to eighteen inches thick. A fellah with money to spare will build on a foundation of kiln-baked bricks (*tâb ahmar*) or of limestone rubble. This prevents the damp

that creeps up from the soil from undermining the building.

The walls have few apertures, partly, again, to ensure stability, but also to protect the interior from heat and glare by day, and against the cold and dangers of the night. The doorway, which is about six feet high and three wide, is separated from the street by a shallow threshold. One or two tiny loopholes above eye level, measuring about twelve inches by eight, are the only other openings to the outside; and even these are stuffed up in winter.

This limitation of window space is due partly to the high price of wood. Egypt, lying in the sparsely wooded zone of tropical desert which stretches from India to the Sudan, is poorly supplied with wood. The date palms, sycamores, and acacias that give shade to the villages are too precious to be cut down for beams, and would in any case be insufficient to provide all the doors and windows that proper hygiene would necessitate. The trunks of date palms are certainly used, but very sparingly, since such trees bring their owners P.T. 100 a year in fruit, branches and fibre. Imported wood (from Finland, Sweden, Rumania and the U.S.S.R.), though commonly used in the towns, is beyond the normal means of the fellah. The result is that the doorway very often contains no door, and the loopholes are almost always without either glass or woodwork.

Though wood is dispensed with as far as possible, for the roof it is essential. In Upper Egypt, where it never rains, some houses remain roofless; but this is exceptional, and as a rule the four walls are at least covered with foliage. Ill-squared beams, set two feet apart, serve as a support for the interwoven stalks of maize, cotton, or reeds, together with palm branches. To prevent this construction from rotting, it is covered with rough mats and plastered with a thick layer of mud-and-cinder. This makes a terrace, which is proof against showers and solid enough in summer to support a roof-but and the sleeping bodies of all the members of the household. The roof can be reached from outside by a wooden ladder or brick staircase; constant access is needed to the place where tools, grain reserves, fuel, and sometimes even poultry are kept.

The necessary habit of keeping dry brushwood and straw on the roof is a frequent cause of fire, which, by reason of the closeness of the houses, soon spreads to the neighbourhood.

731 and to the whole village. A spark from oven or stove in
 [372] the burning heat of summer is enough to bring disaster.
 488] Village fires, by their size and frequency, constitute one of the
 plagues of the Egyptian countryside. Between 1926 and 1930
 sixty-six places were destroyed in this way, and every year,
 especially between April and September, the Public Security
 Department has appalling damage to report. To give an
 idea of its extent, here are four incidents of recent years:

1. January 14, 1936. Village of Mit Yaish, in the Markaz
 of Mit Ghamr. "The fire spread with terrifying speed, ending
 in the destruction of 94 houses. Hundreds of fellahen are
 homeless."

2. April 22, 1936. El Muassaga, in the Markaz of Hehia.
 "The fire spread to 43 houses, which were reduced to ashes,
 with all the cattle, poultry and foodstuffs they contained.
 Losses were estimated at L.E. 300. The enquiry has proved
 that the fire was started by a woman of the village, named
 Nefissa Hassan, who was cooking in her home. A few sparks
 fell on the brushwood on the roof, and with the help of the
 wind the fire quickly spread."

3. May 5, 1937. "A terrible fire broke out in Bakanish,
 in Dessûq Markaz in the Mudiriya of Gharbiya. Five hundred
 houses were completely destroyed; 14 people were burnt
 alive, and 13 others who were rescued are suffering from
 severe burns."

4. January 14, 1941. "Fire broke out in the village of
 Deir, in the Markaz of Toukh, destroying 217 houses, causing
 20 deaths, burning crops and cattle, and leaving 400 families
 destitute. The cause was a woman cooking on the roof."

56 There is indeed a regulation which forbids 'the storing of
 71 brushwood on the flat roofs of houses', and a "Committee for
 Fighting Fires in the Countryside". But no regulation or
 committee can stop the fellah from storing his fuel on the
 roof, unless he is given the means of storing it elsewhere.
 He is similarly advised not to sleep with his cattle, but if
 he left them outside they would be stolen, and inside there
 is so little room.

53 What use does he make of the space available? If
 we go inside, we shall at once notice the darkness and the
 smell, if not the fleas. The house consists of a single
 room, sixteen to twenty feet by ten or twelve. "When

I go visiting my parishioners", says Mgr Khouzam, Bishop of Thebes, "I find few houses with doors. They have square holes for entrances, and these are the only openings. The sole furniture is an oven for bread, a jar of water, a cooking pot and a bowl. In a few houses there is a cord stretched across a corner from wall to wall. This is the wardrobe, where spare clothes are hung. The roof is so low as to be oppressive".

Fortunately, houses normally have two, if not three, rooms. (**) Apart from slight variations in plan, size and arrangement, these usually comprise:

1. A hall (*mandara*). Against the right-hand wall is built a long raised seat (*mastaba*). As the outside door opens into it, this is the best-lighted room in the house. It is used for visitors and guests.

2. Opening into this is the combined sleeping-room and kitchen. In a corner is the oven, built of bricks and set against the wall. Its flat top forms a kind of bed, on which two people sleep in winter. There is no chimney. The smoke escapes by the loophole in the wall.

3. Further in still is a little yard (*zariba*) about six foot wide and partly covered with maize thatch. This serves as a stable for the *gamoossa* and the donkey, but can be approached only through the front door.

The distinction is not very rigid, and there is nothing to prevent the sitting-room from serving as a stable, or the yard as summer sleeping-quarters. The fowls live everywhere; the pigeons nest in niches in the outer wall, or in petrol tins piled together. In villages where there is a Coptic majority, the pigs must also be taken into account; the Christian fellahen rear these, not for themselves, but for European pork-butchers. As often as not, we must add that friend of the fellah and guardian of his goods, his shaggy night-howling dog.

The floor of the house is of beaten earth. The furniture is heaped up in disorder in the corners. For meals there is a Primus stove, one or two copper cooking-pots, and a low round table of white wood about three feet wide and eighteen inches high. For sleeping there are straw mats, a few cotton coverlets, or perhaps only a big sack. Sometimes there are beds constructed of palm branches (in the same way as chicken coops) and perhaps a cotton-stuffed mattress. For household

352 and toilet use there is a large flat tub (*tish*) which serves
 353 as both laundry-basin and bath, a fragment of mirror, and
 296 a big wooden chest which may hold almost anything. This
 515 was a gift at the betrothal, and its crude colours are re-
 minders of a red-letter day. "In this chest near the oven,
 whose key the mistress of the house wears at her neck, I
 have seen all jumbled together eggs, pepper, cheese, rags,
 needles and thread, several necklaces and a packet of *kohl*."
 This from the letter of a surprised French missionary.

181 The close proximity of men, cattle and soil is as noticeable
 356 in the fellah's house as in the field and the village. It is a
 reflection of the fellah's social level and manner of life. Like
 house, like household.

The fellah's dependence on soil, sun and water extends
 even to his house. He himself is of the earth, earthy, through
 his labour and his food, in his diseases and finally in his
 death. His house no less, by the material of which it is made
 — floor, walls, roof and all — and by its very squatness is
 a part of the earth.

342 The fellah lives out of doors because of the lack of
 362 comfort in his home, which is no more than an unfurnished
 181 sleeping-place and a store-room, a part of the crowded camp
 183 which is the village.

All the houses are alike. The fellaheen have little indi-
 viduality; each is an atomised unit of the mass, and his
 household but one cell in the agricultural hive. At the same
 time there is little or no space reserved for agricultural uses.
 The fellah works for others, and does not store the produce
 of the land for himself.

Yet this dwelling, which lacks so much that we deem
 essential, is so well adapted to its tenants and their habits
 that they will change or rather deform into its likeness any
 better-appointed house built for them on a model *'ezba*.

342 A house on an *'ezba* belongs to the owner, one in the
 421 village to the fellah. House and site together are worth
 at the most L.E. 25. There is no rent or house tax to pay.
 On an *'ezba* the dwelling enters into the conditions of lease
 or share-tenancy. In the village it belongs to the head of
 the family.

592 In this homestead scarcely larger than himself the fellah
 leads a life of his own, no longer as a serf but as a master.
 Each house contains a large family, including very often,
 besides the father and mother, four or five children, a grand-

father or grandmother (who wields great authority), a married son, and some cousin or other on a prolonged visit. 592

When a fellah wishes to get married, if he is of age he deals directly with the girl's father and pays him the price. If he is young, that is less than eighteen, his mother will try to find him the ideal bride among her relations or neighbours, almost always in the same district. The girl will be fourteen or fifteen years of age, and by no means ignorant of the facts of life. The law of 1923, however, has fixed sixteen as the age of marriage ("). 584 [751] 582

The betrothal is celebrated by proxy in a contract of marriage ('aqd). The dowry (*mahr*) which the man must offer varies between L.E. 5 and L.E. 10. He pays two thirds down, and binds himself to pay the rest by a document drawn up by the *maarûn* or the *'omda*. 583 587

With this money the girl's parents go to the market-town to buy her trousseau, consisting of a red wedding-dress and gold bracelets (costing L.E. 1 or L.E. 2), and for furniture a water-jug, two copper cooking-pots (*halla*), a tub (*tisht*), a round table (*tablia*), and a brightly coloured chest cased in zinc. If the *mahr*, is large enough, they will also buy a mattress stuffed with cotton or straw, one or two pillows, and a quilted coverlet (*lihdaf*).

On the wedding-day, that is to say the day the bride leaves her father's house to go to her husband's, all these things are loaded on to a camel hired for the occasion, and paraded round the village. The young girls go before and after, singing and clapping their hands, and the villagers admire the treasures as they pass. This takes place in the afternoon, and is followed by the departure of the bride. A crowd of women and children press into the room to see how she looks in her finery. The older women have bathed her the evening before, and her hands and feet have been reddened with henna. Her marriageable friends, in order to share her luck, have pinched her thighs. The procession can now begin. 585 [302] 789

The bride is hidden by red or white veils, and rides on a camel or in an old motorcar. Two or three women relatives go with her under the canopy. The men fire shots into the air (an Arab custom), while shrill tremolo cries (*naghârât*) alternate with songs from the women. [152]

585 The bridegroom too has made himself ready. He
 [515] has had a bath in his best friend's house. His best clothes
 have been brought, and the *mizayra* has come to groom him
 and put henna on his hands. Outside a crowd of people are
 waiting for him to come out. At last he is ready. His
 men friends ring him round with candles, and a torchlight
 procession begins. He holds a white handkerchief over his
 face as if to mask himself, as they strike up songs of love and
 pleasure (*maufull*), which mingle with the sound of shots.
 Meanwhile the women throw pinches of salt over the men.
 When the family house is reached, the bridegroom's friends
 snatch him from the crowd and drag him in. The young
 bride is already waiting, surrounded by the women who
 have tested her virginity, and the marriage is consummated
 without much secrecy. In the street outside, amidst the
 cries of the crowd, singing and dancing goes on all night and
 all the next day. Coloured sweets and treacly pastries are
 [262] handed round. On this day there is no thought of economy.
 After his marriage the young man spends a week or a fort-
 night without going to work, and during this time he is called
 "Prince" (*amir*).

592 The household is thus begun, but for several years more
 606 the couple will be dependent on the husband's family. If
 554 the wife is clever, obeys her mother-in-law, and bears her
 595 husband many male children, he will not take another wife.
 The same will happen if he is poor, and cannot afford the
 expenses of another wedding.

585 It is perfectly legal for a Moslem to have four wives, or
 581 to divorce. But the fellah makes little use of this Koranic
 178 liberty. In the last ten years a considerable decline has
 been noted in polygamy and divorce. The reason, according
 to a provincial official, is not so much the progress of civilisa-
 tion as the increasing poverty of the fellahs. Lower
 Egypt being richer, more bigamous marriages are recorded
 there than in Upper Egypt.

586 Divorce is carried out merely by repeating three times
 the words of repudiation (*talag*). Nothing could be easier,
 but as he is obliged to pay maintenance to the divorced
 wife, and a new dowry to the one who takes her place, the
 fellah usually keeps to one wife. Other details also enter
 into the matter. Statistics show that the country population
 585 comprises almost as many men as women. For the whole

of Egypt in 1937 there were 7,947,193 men to 7,957,332 women. As nearly everyone marries, the inference is obvious. It may be, too, that Moslem customs have been counteracted to some extent by natural law and by Christian influence as represented in the Coptic family. In any case, years of work and suffering together, children, and a wife's good care create an almost unbreakable bond.

The temperament of the fellahen, especially of the women, is very ardent and sensual. Marriage is to them less an affair of love than one of sexual attraction and reproduction.

The fellah's wife usually enjoys better health than her husband, who is weakened by bilharzia. She is younger and despite Islam has had considerable freedom in her own affairs since the most ancient times. Village tradition requires on pain of death that she should be physically a virgin when she marries, but mentally she has ceased to be so long before. Since childhood she has been aware of her parents' intercourse, which is quite open owing to lack either of privacy or of modesty. The conversation of the women, even before young girls, turns often on these subjects, not perhaps viciously, but certainly without restraint. They tell each other of the charms and stratagems with which to please and hold their menfolk.

The men, who are more reserved and by their way of life utterly materialistic, understand only sexual love. They revel in it, each with his own wife, and are kept faithful by virtue than by village law. Adultery leads immediately to bloodshed, and prostitutes are beyond their means.

The heat of passion is short-lived. At thirty a fellah woman is no longer attractive, but the children she has borne her husband bind him to her. Both want children above everything else. To the wife they mean social prestige, for barrenness is a disgrace and the chief cause of polygamy and divorce (**). To the father they represent helpers and successors, who will allow him to rest and give orders. Accordingly families are large. The average number of children is five, and this presupposes eight to ten births. The older they grow the more important does the mother become.

Another thing that binds the man to his wife is her wisdom and authority, which are often greater than his. A fellah proverb has it that 'Man is a river, woman a dyke'.

594 From a fortnight after marriage until her first son is five
462 years old, the wife helps her husband in the fields, especially
in the cotton season; but, unlike the Alawite peasant women
for example, she never tackles heavy work.

462 More often she is busy at home; there is plenty to do,
562 for she mills and bakes, rears and milks the *gamoosaa* and the
goat, looks after the fowls, prepares manure and fuel, sows,
593 washes, and delouses herself in public.

She is free to come and go within the limits set by village
tradition. She is not hidden from the menfolk like towns-
women or the women of the middle class. She has to carry
breakfast to her husband out in the fields, then return home
with the *gamoosaa's* dung, and fetch water several times a
day. She must go to market to sell eggs, butter and poultry,
and to buy oil and other things. Tradition and necessity
outweigh the severity of the Koran.

The wife retains ownership of the furniture she brought
on her wedding-day, and the money for what she sells. In
this way she can save and even lend to her husband, which
gives her a certain authority. If he maltreats her, she can
go back to her father's house and impose her own conditions
before returning — the gift of a dress, or a pair of ear-rings.
She is less dependent on her husband than he is on her.

593 A year or two ago, when the men were being levied to
181 meet the flood danger, I heard a woman weeping. "Don't
731 take it so much to heart", I said. "They've taken your
231 husband off, but he'll come back."

"It isn't for my husband I'm crying, but for my lost
gamoosaa. Find me my *gamoosaa*."

562 The *fellaha* retains her liberty and authority as long as
577 she is wise enough not to infringe the traditions; for then
the man gets the upper hand again. She will die rather
than let herself be examined or treated by a doctor. She
may go out and gossip with the other women as much as
she likes, but woe to her if she is found in the company of
a man, or even alone in some unwonted place. If she goes
wrong, her husband accuses her to her family. Then her
694 father, brother, or cousin must kill her. Such *crimes d'hon-*
577 *neur*, being commended though not established by Islam,
are still frequent and are treated with indulgence by the courts.
But the severity of the punishment is out of proportion not
only to the crime, but also to the woman's education.

The following is one of a hundred examples.

Mahmoud Ahmed 'Abdallah was leaving his village near Nag' Hammadi, one day in March 1937, to go as usual to the fields, when he learnt that his sister, a widow of thirty-five, had been seduced. Hearing this he returned at once to the village and went to his sister's house. Without uttering a word he seized the *faas* he had with him and split open the poor woman's skull. When the crime became known, the Maamûr of the Markaz, the District Judge, and the Inspector of Public Health went together to the spot. The man himself gave the police the weapon he had used to murder his sister, and after confessing his crime, declared that he had wanted to avenge the family honour. 684
577

The wife may be the real ruler of the household, but woe to any woman who shows a lack of respect for her husband by walking in front of him on the way to market, or by interrupting him in any way while he is talking or playing with his friends. He never calls her by her own name, but addresses her as: *Ya mara* (Woman!), *Ya bint* (Girl!), or *Ya Umm Ahmad* (Mother of Ahmad! — his son). He shows his supremacy here by treating her scornfully and giving no sign of affection. The older he gets, the more he demands and values this respect. 573
562
[60]

"My wife has borne me ten children", said a fellah. "Ten children; and not one of them squints or is blind. With them beside me I feel myself honoured and respected. Thanks to their mother, their feet have never wandered along the paths of shame. She wipes their noses and cleans their faces. She teaches them to kiss my hand when I come back from the fields, to rise when I come in, to serve me first, and never to smoke when I am there."

The peasant wife, who may bear children at any time between the ages of fourteen and forty-five, gives birth in the simplest fashion in the world, sitting, like the women of Pharaonic times. Mishaps are rare. 344

But the birth is preceded and followed by a thousand practices intended to bring the child fullness of health and happiness. The magic rites are far more important than hygienic precautions. The mother is firmly persuaded that whatever she looks at attentively or wishes for ardently while she is with child will have an effect on the baby. So she 343

843 avoids looking at any dead person, and gazes on portraits of handsome men, perhaps magazine cuttings that she has pinned on the wall. She must be able to eat what she likes. If she is thwarted, the child will be seriously affected.

846 Immediately after birth the baby is put in a basket, 783 which serves as a cradle, and is not washed for seven days. [852] The first bath has a ritual significance of purification. It is given by the midwife, and the water is poured from a pot (sbrfq) specially kept for this purpose, with different ornamentation for a girl and for a boy. The mother is technically impure for thirty or forty days after, according as the child is a girl or a boy. These Moslem customs are also found in Morocco.

844 If at the moment of birth the father is working in the [831] fields, and the child is a son, a friend will run and tell him the good news, for which he can claim a gift. This tradition recalls a text in Jeremiah: 'Cursed be the man who took the tidings to my father, saying to him "A son is born", and who filled him with joy'. (Ch. XX, v.15).

777 As soon as the child is born, a blue bead is hung round 751 his neck to turn away the evil eye. For the same reason the boy of whom his parents are so proud may be dressed like a girl, till he is weaned. His mother will give him suck for two years at least, at far too frequent intervals, thus 853 causing gastric troubles. This is the length of time favoured 842 by the ancient Egyptians, by the black peoples of Africa, 586 and by Koranic precept: "Divorced mothers shall give suck to their children for two full years" (Sura II, 233). The peasant women think that by weaning late they will delay another pregnancy.

854 When the time comes for her to go out — and this hap- 482 pens very soon — she carries the infant astride her shoulder, which does not prevent her from carrying a pot full of water on her head. While she is working in the fields she puts her baby on the ground, near the path which threads the crops, in the shadow of the maize. The baby does not always have something to lie on, but rolls in the furrow, puts earth in its mouth, screams, sleeps and gets used to it all. If it cries 855 too loud, any passing mother will give it her breast.

854 The child stays at home until his fifth year. He soon gets used to the company of the animals there. Before 857 long he is capable of looking after them and can take the

donkey to the fields and the ~~gamosas~~ to the canal, where he 857
 climbs on its back and sets it turning the ~~aspis~~. The child
 learns how to cry out, how to chase off thieving birds with
 stones, how to pick and even plant cotton. He does not
 lack amusement, for he has plenty of companions. During
 the day, when the men are toiling in the fields and the
 women are busy in the house or by the canal, the whole vil-
 lage belongs to the children. It is they whom a visitor
 sees first. They paddle stark naked in the pond, and learn
 to swim. They have bulging bellies, for they eat anything [524]
 and everything. They play in the dust, spinning an onion
 as a top, hopping on one leg and holding the other heel
 with their hands, or shooting with a catapult (*nibla*) at date-
 palms or birds. When they are a little older they play at
sig, a kind of marble game with small pebbles which have
 to be moved into forty-nine holes made in the sand.

At about the age of seven the young fellah is circumcised, 852
 and thus introduced into the world of men. At this stage he
 has to go to the elementary school (*ilamiya*), at least in the 872
 mornings. His parents are bound to send him, under pain of 656
 a fine of twenty piastres, or fifty for a second offence. 95% [212]
 of the fellaheen are illiterate, and the Government wishes
 to wipe out this disgrace from the next generation. The
 1923 Constitution decreed that education should be com-
 pulsory, but it is only since 1935 that this order has begun
 to take effect. Schools are being established all over the
 countryside. Gradually sites are being found in the villages,
 schools set up, and teachers appointed. Every year, places
 that within living memory had never seen a teacher are
 provided with a complete teaching staff. In 1946 there
 should be 4,600 free elementary schools, and the whole child
 population will be receiving instruction (").

The parents do not understand these new ideas. Though 177
 accustomed to other tyrannical institutions, they do not 971
 resign themselves to this. Some Upper Egyptians of 'Ezbet 183
 Balkan, who had been fined for not sending their children 579
 to the compulsory Government school, attacked the teachers
 and wounded them. The peasants care little for education.
 They only want their children to help them to increase their
 earnings. Moreover, most villages are still served, according 971
 to the ancient system, by a *kuttab*, in which a blind teacher, 774
 seated on the ground, gathers a few children round him
 and teaches them the Koran.

871 His methods are by no means arduous. Two or three
774 hours a day, six months a year, and in three years the fellah
children, helped by the stick, will know a good many *suras*
by heart. For his pains the *figla* or teacher receives two
loaves of bread, or one piastre, a week for each pupil.

872 Nowadays even the girls must go to school, but their
562 turn comes in the afternoon. In the morning they help
their mothers and fetch in the water, trying their best to
[462] balance on their heads the little *ballas* which is given them.
857 When they grow up they will be able to carry seven gallons
of water in this way. They are also made to gather dung,
bird-droppings, and any other refuse which may be useful
in the house or the field. They make fuel cakes (*gilla*) by
[372] taking a little mud, some chopped straw and a quantity of
dung, which they knead into a paste with their hands and
feet, and then take lumps of, to flatten into cakes about eight
inches across. These are spread out on the ground to dry in
the sun, or stuck on the wall. When thoroughly dry they
are piled up on the roof. These dung-cakes are the fellah's
coal; they are an essentially agricultural form of fuel, used
wherever wood and money are lacking, for example in China
and in several parts of France.

524 The girls have rag dolls to play with, but more often,
857 up to the age of about twelve, they join with the boys in
both work and play. Occasionally, from the age of eight
[464] until they get married, they go into service in middle-class
homes.

857 These children are ignorant and to all appearance neg-
593 lected. They live in a herd and seem to have no patronymics.
But it would be wrong to infer from this that they are of no
concern to their parents, and belong to the community at
large. On the contrary their parents love them passionately,
far more than they, love each other. Children are never put
[734] up for sale here as they are in China, and there is no need for
orphanages. Parental sensitiveness is a frequent cause of
quarrels among both men and women. If a teacher hits or
861 ill-treats their child they are up in arms immediately to
871 remove him from school and take a brutal vengeance. This
does not, however, stop them from using blows and insults
to 'educate' their children themselves.

593 The children are also very much attached to both
their parents. This attachment seems to be rooted in their

social and religious traditions, and in fear and natural respect rather than in any deep affection. 593

Yet the love of the son for his mother, even when he is grown up and married, is the most noticeable attachment in the fellah family. If he has been lacking in respect for her, the whole village is shocked. 'Paradise lies under your mother's feet.' She is mistress of his household, till her dying day. She is even named after her son, as *Umm 'Aly*, the Mother of 'Aly. 597

This relationship is the most solid bond in the family, the more so as ancestry counts for little. The peasant family has no forefathers, no family name, no individuality and no independence. In this it is very different from the Chinese family, to which ancestor-worship and the honour of the family name are very important. 593

Here the family group shades off into a wider community more or less closely interrelated by blood and marriage, the family in the social sense. Under the authority of its head this enlarged family attends funerals and weddings, carries on fouds, and is ready to avenge the honour of any one of its members. This solidarity is only of the present, for after three generations it is no longer recognisable. So, just as the house is not a complete unit by itself, neither is the family which lives in it. As there is no real 'home', because there is no home life, so there is no real 'family', because there is no family life. 602

The family is a group for working the soil, into which children are born as additional helpers. Its union with the soil is made doubly sure by a tangle of traditions regulating life in the home. 593

CHAPTER VIII

TRADITIONS OF THE SOIL

181 Certain traditions, rites and ceremonies are handed down from generation to generation without being either questioned or understood^(*). These are traditions of the soil, bearing witness to the union of the fellah with his field, and the closeness of the peasant group to soil and water and their products.

This intimacy was clear enough when we were considering the work, life and home of the fellah. We shall do well to prepare ourselves for a study of the fellah's psychology (Chapter IX) by considering some of the traditional rites and customs which are to be met with at every turn of his life.

These are not merely superstitions, though it would be as difficult for us as it is for the fellaheen themselves to explain the origin or meaning of them all. One thing they all seem to have in common: they point to a mysterious correlation between nature and man. Unconsciously or subconsciously, in repeating these rites the fellah shows an instinctive feeling that he belongs to the soil. It is a feeling which has contributed a good deal to the stagnation of the Egyptian countryside.

312 The fellaheen have a great respect for water, the water
271 that comes from the Nile. They avoid filtering it, so as
823 not to take the life out of it. They bring it to be blessed by the passing missionary, and offer it as a familiar and much-appreciated drink. They never mistrust it, and make no distinction between washing- and drinking-water. All water is good, like the Nile from which it comes.

796 The festival of the Bride of the Nile, or the Cutting of the Dam, takes place in Cairo^(*) at the height of the flood. The fellah has no part in it, but he feels much more than any townsman that the Nile is male and alive. The river
823 is always flowing within his sight, either in the foreground,

or like a silver thread in the distance. He resorts to it more often than to his fellowmen. He does not pray to it, as his ancestors did, but he constantly visits it. The Nile is in his blood. There is the same intimate bond between the Nile and the fellahen as between the sea and the fishermen of Brittany. They even call it *el Baḥr*, the sea, and their fields they call "shores" (*el rîf* — plural *el ariaf* — the usual word for the Egyptian countryside) (**). At High Nile they believe women to be more fertile and men more healthy; marriages are most often celebrated at this season. If a child is sickly or ill, his mother takes him on the Nile at this time, and makes him throw sweets and dates into the clayey waters, with the words "Oh Nile, let my strength grow like your depth". A dying fellah, before he breathes his last, is given a final draught of its living water.

In the Coptic Mass there is the following prayer: "Vouchsafe, O Lord, to bless this year the water of the river. By Thy grace bring it to due height. Gladden the face of the land, that the fields may have water and the crops be multiplied."

The silt of the Nile has its part also in the rites of life and death. The fellāha, when her time is coming, crawls to the brink of the water and takes up a handful of moist earth, which she will swallow at the time of delivery to ensure a successful birth.

When the *mizayen* cuts the child's hair for the first time, the hair ceremoniously cut off is not flung to the winds, but carefully rolled into a ball of earth.

Professional mourners bedaub their breasts, heads, and arms with mud as a sign of grief. The body is put into the earth without either coffin or clothes.

The fellahen bury in the earth the jar containing their savings, and charms which they wish to take effect. Every birth affects the soil; the after-brith is buried inside the house, and the umbilical cord, wrapped up in a little bag with a few grains of corn, is dug into the father's field.

The fruits of the earth are still more closely involved in this peasant mysticism. The analogies between vegetable life and the peasants' own extremely physical existence make them believe in an interplay of fertility between the two.

The ceremonies of the seventh day, when the newly-born child is washed and given a name, often include the following

553 rite. Three rush baskets filled with different kinds of grain
 552 are brought into the room. One supports the sieve in which
 the infant is lying. When it is time for the bath, the mid-
 wife shakes the sieve, as if to sift both the child and the corn.
 Then she puts the grain back into the basket, wraps up the
 child and sprinkles a few grains upon it.

853 The word *fidma*, used for the weaning of children, is
 243 also used for the tenth and last watering of the maize. Sweet
 431 cakes are given to the workers that day, as to the mother,
 465 for it is the last day of suckling.

243 Harvest is always accompanied by symbolic acts.
 777 Before reaping begins, the best ears are taken and plaited
 789 into a kind of doll called the 'Bride of the Corn', which is
 hung up in the house to bring good luck during the ensuing
 year. Similarly, to bind the chain of life, the biggest grains
 are mixed with the seed for the next sowing, and a few fine
 loaves are slipped into the heap on the threshing-floor to
 be winnowed and sieved.

782 Mgr Khouzam, reporting on his pastoral visit in Novem-
 789 ber 1937, wrote as follows: "On entering their houses, I
 blessed water, bread and corn. They drank some of the water
 and used the rest to sprinkle themselves, their cattle and
 their houses. The corn they flung into their fields. As for
 the bread, I was made to break it and eat a little of it. The
 rest they kept among their stores that God might bless
 what they had laid by."

789 The joy of harvest shines also on those who have not
 465 ploughed, but whose work in the village has benefited the
 431 whole community. Tradition allots the first fruits of the
 735 harvest to the reciter, the barber, the cantor of the mosque,
 248 the schoolmaster and the carpenter. After these have
 claimed their sheaves, the poor come to glean their share.
 Cotton-picking, however, gives rise to no sort of ceremony.
 This is perhaps because cotton has only recently been
 introduced; or because it is grown for profit and not for
 daily bread (").

245 The date palm, on the contrary, is as old as Egyptian
 agriculture itself, and figures at all times in the life of the
 people. They turn to this tree for shade and for roofing, for
 beds and coops, for ropes and brushes. We have seen its

branches in use to adorn the bride's canopy and the tombs of the dead. 245

The day after his wedding the bridegroom strips a palm branch, splits it at the point and goes to touch his friends with it for good luck. To strike a man with a green palm branch brings blessing. Palms to the fellah are like flowers, and there can be no procession or wedding or funeral without them. 575 777

The pollen of a male date-palm mixed with water is a charm against childlessness. On the other hand, to swallow one, two, or three date-stones will prevent childbearing for as many years. 777 842

Magic and medicine are confused in the traditional use of the products of the earth to preserve or recover health. The startling pharmacopoeia of the fellaheen is to be put down partly to experience but chiefly to superstition. They have taken whatever came to hand and used it: for the bowels an infusion of palm or maize leaves; for the eyes onion juice or charred cotton; for broken bones acacia gum; for swellings or rheumatism bandages of hemp. The treatment clearly depends on what plants they have within reach, and the effect, in great part, on credulity. 785 757 278

These peasant traditions, unquestioned and irresistible, are largely superstitious. Miss Blackman gives the greater part of her book (**) to describing superstition in its thousand forms, as if the whole life of the fellaheen were passed in these sub-rational affairs. Too much weight, probably is laid on fellah superstitions. They are recorded with a certain condescension, and in spite of all that has been published on the subject there are still many gaps. However, there is no point in enriching the collection, since there is nothing original in it. Most of these customs are common to the whole of the East or to Islam. The rest, which go back beyond Christianity to ancient Egypt, are one more illustration of the changelessness which was the subject of our first chapter. 183 171 178

It is certain that these benumbing practices of the fellaheen are even more effective than their manner of life in isolating them and bringing about that withdrawal which 'man creates for himself by the whole structure which he founds on his own labour'. To a way of living which itself weighs him to the ground the fellah adds the burden of these ritual observances.

771 Out of reverence for the past, which for the ignorant
182 fellah is shrouded in mystery, a system of rites has been
183 evolved, which he considers inviolable. This, while maintain-
ing and comforting the individual, at the same time stifles
his liberty and initiative and dulls his spirit until he is no
longer able to distinguish between the essential and the
superfluous.

But this structure, however vast it may be, does not con-
stitute the whole of the fellah's psychology. It is one of the
pressures he has to bear. Like the pressure of the soil and
of living men, it warps him considerably, but it is no more
able than they are to destroy his soul.

CHAPTER IX

THE PSYCHOLOGY OF THE FELLAH

The peasant masses live on their own resources, without any contribution to speak of from outside. This is their strength and their weakness. A peasant is born, whereas a worker is made. The constant influence of the fellah's environment cannot fail to mould not only his body, but his soul as well.

We now know what the fertile Valley of the Nile, on the one hand, and the pressure of the social pyramid, on the other, consists in. The demands of both enslave the fellah; his life is all dependence—dependence on the soil, on material things, on the living and on the dead. The fellah must always obey, like a child under age; such is the framework within which the outlines of his temperament are drawn. However difficult and however liable to misleading generalisations any study of collective psychology may be, we can nevertheless trace with sufficient accuracy the essential features of the mind and character of the fellaheen. The common factors of country, race, religion, social status, and manner of life, all of which we have considered in the foregoing chapters, entitle us to write in the singular of the fellah's soul.

It would be easy but unjust to judge him on a single point, as his masters do. "The fellah is lazy", they say. "All bodily labour is an effort to him. So he would rather live without bettering his condition than tire himself".

"The fellah is hardly ever grateful. However good his masters may be to him, he never shows them the least sympathy. He swears devotion to them when they are there and is active and hardworking; but as soon as their backs are turned he becomes slack again and loses all initiative. "The fellaheen are a cowardly, cringing lot". "They are stupid, evil people. They take every opportunity of cheating you."

181 Other landowners or mazzers take a better view. They
 183 say: "Under their noisy exterior, our fellahen are
 quiet, gentle people. They are satisfied with their lot, but
 rarely grateful. They have no interests apart from the soil."
 "The fellah is always happy and grateful. He is a hard and
 trusty worker."

114 Some of these opinions, which are taken at random from
 181 both Upper and Lower Egypt, seem flatly contradictory. They
 are not enough to make up a portrait, in spite of the good
 183 intentions of those who gave them; they all arise from a
 misunderstanding of the fellah and are in both senses of the
 word *partial* truths. The living reality is more complex.
 It would be an error of simplification to say 'Man is born good
 and it is society that makes him bad', or to look at only one
 side, the good or the evil, according to one's sympathy or
 lack of sympathy with the subject, or to one's own charac-
 teristic personal philosophy and outlook. To create a true
 picture, all these aspects must be taken into account. As in
 the old stereoscope, the image cannot appear in depth until
 both views are seen together, when there is a real combi-
 nation of elements.

181 One important point must have become clear from what
 183 has already been said: that the fellah's intelligence is rather
 collective than personal, and more static than dynamic.
 His wisdom and experience have crystallised into pithy
 sayings and proverbs, which are ready coin for all the differ-
 ent circumstances of his life and absolve him from individ-
 ual thinking.

The fellah preserves and repeats, but does not originate
 anything. Any improvements or inventions introduced
 into agriculture or housing have been imposed on him from
 outside. Through constant acceptance and submission his
 intelligence has become atrophied and passive. It is always
 kept in leading-strings and never stimulated to innovation.
 That would mean running risks and disturbing a torpor
 which protects him from unnecessary suffering. What a
 man knows is better than what he does not know.

This lack of personality and initiative furnishes in its
 turn an explanation for the want of sensibility or of any
 living art among the fellahen. They are uncultivated in
 this direction less because they are illiterate than because
 they neither think nor strive. In their fellah costume, in

their villages and in their fields they provide subjects for ⁸¹the art of others, but remain unconscious of their own beauty. ⁸³Yet their love of the soil, their sense of rhythm, and their taste for songs, stories and colours should make their artistic education easy.

They are more apt at figures, at repetition and at copying. The author has met fellahen who can do very complicated arithmetical problems in their heads, and can put an accountant right where he has made a mistake, whether by accident or design. Others reproduce models they are given with the utmost faithfulness, and retain for a very long time the memory of a remark or a visit, or of an object they have been shown. But although their memory is excellent their understanding is slow.

Yet in childhood they are quick to understand, as may be seen when they are in school or at play; but at about fifteen they begin to get dull. Up to this age the fellahen are lively, and seem quicker than the people of the West.

Their early physical development and the effect of the ⁸¹climate might explain this. But what can explain the ⁸²apathy that overcomes them afterwards, and keeps them, in spite of everything, a backward race?

Undernourishment has been suggested as a cause. But if this were responsible their physical development would also suffer. The adult fellah has a strong constitution. ⁸⁴²Some sociologists put it down to masturbation, which is ⁸³⁹fairly common in the Islamic East; but this vice seems limited to the cities, for country people are much less morbid. It has also been attributed to the unavoidable effect of climate, as a plant which grows too quickly stops growing at a certain point, and withers. But there are fellahen who have left their villages and produced in the second generation good doctors, capable engineers, or at least officials and businessmen equal to those of other countries.

It can only be his social environment which limits the intelligence of the young fellah, that is to say the crass ignorance which surrounds him from his first entry into the community, and the routine of a life which bows him down to the soil and condemns him to everlasting repetition. This is what arrests the development of his mind. Intelligence is developed by new gain and achievements, which are unknown in this too stable world of the Egyptian peasantry.

161 The women are more intelligent than the men. Sir
 164 William Willcocks, whose great achievements in irrigation
 by no means prevented him from studying the fellahs,
 explains the difference thus: — "A bad government, if pas-
 sively accepted by men, who are naturally active, will sooner
 or later demoralise them. The same government, if pas-
 sively submitted to by women, who are naturally passive,
 tends on the contrary to develop their intelligence. That is
 why the fellah women are not only more intelligent, but more
 trustworthy than the men ("").

This opinion is open to discussion. The fact it seeks
 to explain — the traditional feminism of Egypt — is quite
 clear.

161 The fellah's wife is also more cunning than her husband,
 163 which is saying a good deal. Like all weak people the fellah
 562 practices cunning to the point of duplicity. He knows how
 to conceal his joy, his suffering or his crime. His inexpress-
 sive features are a great help. In his shifts and dodges —
 when he leaves it to time to decide, when he agrees without
 any intention of keeping his word, when he uses evasive
 language or purposely misunderstands — he shows an
 adaptability which is indeed a kind of intelligence, but
 intelligence at the level of instinct.

161 The fellah seems lacking in logic. In reality his ideas
 run parallel, and he judges by his own standards. Ask a
 563 fellah how far it is to a certain village, and he will reply
 "A piastre bus-ride".

161 The 'omda understands this mentality perfectly. "Go
 565 to your father, my lad, and tell him that the Bey (his credi-
 tor) is waiting here for him. If your father isn't there,
 tell him to come all the same, for the Bey knows that he is
 there." And the father, his bluff called in advance, comes
 along without any trouble at all.

161 The truth is that the fellah does not think outside the
 immediate present; he is fettered to the actual moment. No
 time and place except the present have much effect on his
 mind, because they have none on his senses. He is like a
 primitive man or a child; his intellect is controlled by his
 senses, and remains close to things felt and done. The
 fellah looks for causes and effects in the field not of reason,
 sight. Life to him is a succession but of today. That
 is why he seems illogical.

This mental defect, which is maintained by lack of education, is the cause of his improvidence. The whole year through he will deny himself even necessities; then the Feast comes, and he spends everything. His whole family enjoys two or three days of excitement — new clothes, rich food, sight-seeing. Then he goes back to his old life poorer than ever.

Suppose he has a few pounds in hand, which he has earned or borrowed, and his field needs attention. Does he buy tools or good manure to increase its yield? No, he will run further into debt to purchase the adjoining lot, to own a little more, to seem less of a smallholder. And when the time comes to repay! Sufficient unto the day...

The housewife never trims her lamp until it is already dark. The ploughman never greases his plough until he begins work. He pays his debts when he is forced to, buys seed at the eve of sowing, sends for the doctor when there is no more hope. He is improvidence incarnate.

Alqirizi, writing in the fourteenth century, notes this shortsightedness. "One side of the Egyptian character is never to take thought for the future. The Egyptians never store up provisions like the inhabitants of other lands. Another of their characteristics is the absence of reflection. My friend Sheikh Ibn Khaldoun used to say: 'The Egyptians act as if no day of reckoning would ever come'."

It is a fact that they neither think nor act except as the occasion demands, according to the pressure felt at the actual moment. Their reaction is determined by immediate sensation. This is why they are at the same time trustful and mistrustful, individualistic and gregarious, miserly and thrifless, patient and fiery-tempered.

They show a trust amounting to credulity in sacred things or persons able, as they think, to fulfil their desire for children, revenge or health. Their innumerable superstitions, the prestige enjoyed by ministers of the cult, and the success of pious-seeming impostors are all signs of this unbelievable credulity.

At the same time they habitually mistrust one another, even within the same family. Their master they mistrust even when he does well by them. They are like children too often deceived and stinted, who suspect everybody else of being jealous of the little they have. This is the root of their belief in the Evil Eye.

181 This fear and mistrust, justified by long ages of extortion
183 and betrayal, make the fellah selfish and unable to see anything except as it touches himself. When he saves, it is in the greatest secrecy. If he has done good business, he will take great care not to speak about it; so closely does misfortune dog prosperity. When matters of profit, land or women — the usual causes of division — are no longer in question, then the social instinct becomes paramount. We have seen how gregarious the fellahs are in their work, their rejoicings and their sorrows. This sociability, when there is imminent danger to face, turns into solidarity. More usually it results in good humour and childlike display.

The more the fellah has saved up in this secret hiding-place in his home, the more likely he is to be carried away by the crowd at a holiday feast and squander it, for show as much as for enjoyment, like a child who cannot resist the temptation of a shop-window.

He is light-hearted, because neither past nor future worries him. He enjoys to the full the present moment: *Carpe diem*. When interrupted by an order, he replies "Tomorrow" (*bakra*), driving what he has to do out of the range of his consciousness, holding as long as he can to the present. Even when he has to obey at once he replies "Hadir" (presently) or "Tayyib" (very well) without any intention of hurrying himself. Everything in its own time. As he hopes for no improvement, why should he exert himself? His torpor is his refuge, his *kaiif*, that is to say his 'how', the way things suit him.

Kaiif is a word of profound significance, expressing a kind of wakeful passivity which means doing nothing, saying nothing, thinking nothing. It is a form of perfect patience, taught him by the soil. To keep his mind half awake, to wait without apparent activity, or to drown activity in a private fantasy, in a humming which lulls his work and all his movement, in a mental languor which softens the shocks of human contact, that is *kaiif*, the fundamental attitude of the fellah, a semi-consciousness which abates suffering.

He will come several hours early to catch a train, but may equally well arrive several hours late for an appointment. Punctuality, precision and haste are beyond his ken. Why should he set limits to the present or hustle it away?

Because the fellah lives entirely in the present, he is ¹⁸¹neither hurried, nor curious, nor ambitious. He is mild and ¹⁸³peaceable because he is patient, and patient because he is subject to men and events, and for these very reasons he is, like the Nile, indifferent rather than idle. He feels no need for constant activity. His mind is passive and fatalistic; he takes things as they come.

At times, however, some fact breaks suddenly through ¹⁸¹the confused atmosphere of his mind, through this mist ¹⁵²that protects him from excess of knowledge or action — as ⁵⁷⁷from suicide — and goads him into activity. Then he reacts ⁵⁷⁸on the impulse of the moment, without discrimination or sense of proportion, without reckoning the importance of what has happened or thinking of the consequences of what he is doing. His neighbour pinches some of his harvest, ¹⁶⁵a duck, or a fowl. Someone diverts his irrigation water or lets a *gamoosaa* loose on his grazing. His son is bullied by another boy or his wife insulted by some other woman. A ¹⁶³friend delays too long in returning a few borrowed piastres, ⁴²⁶or looks too long at his wife. Someone brings a complaint or accusation against him. Then the same fellah who is so patient under the injustice or cruelty of his superiors shows himself to his equals as touchy as can be. The occurrence may be of little or no importance, but it seems to him intolerable and stings him to revenge. He reacts violently, and infects others with the same passion as himself. Human life counts for nothing.

In Upper Egypt, when a man quarrels with another he ⁵⁷⁹will try to attack him on the spot with any weapon he can ¹⁸¹lay his hands on. The fellah of the Sa'id is like a volcano ⁵⁷⁸which will erupt when least expected.

More usually the revenge is cunningly dissembled, and carried out by night with endless precautions. The enemy will be set upon from behind, in the maize fields; or if the man himself is not attacked his crop will be burnt, his *gamoosaa* poisoned, or his corn scattered over the neighbouring fields.

Though the fellah will put up with a multitude of wrongs ¹⁸¹from his masters when at work, he is not afraid to stand up ¹⁸³to them if the dispute is about women, for women and land ⁵⁷⁸are the points on which he is most susceptible. Then there ⁵⁸²

181 is no question of strong and weak, rich and poor. Authority
 183 and wealth count for nothing. Landowners know this,
 578 and cannot take their pleasure of the village women.
 562 More than one Bey has been murdered at his own door for
 seducing a village girl.

682 Murder and revenge among the fellahen arise more
 181 often from quick temper than from ill will; they are signs
 152 of hot blood. But such outbursts do not last long, and
 resignation, being more habitual, is a far more noticeable
 characteristic.

[539] The following fellah proverbs are significant:
 Patience moves mountains.
 Patience costs nothing.
 The patient man sees free.

773 'When God created all things', says Ka'b el Ahbar,
 according to Maqrizi, 'He gave each of them a companion.
 "I am going to Syria", said Reason. "I will come with
 you", said Rebellion. Poverty said "I am going to the
 Desert". "I'll come with you", said Health. "I am going
 to Egypt", said Plenty. "And I'll go at your side", said
 Resignation.'

181 Resignation is a word scarcely strong enough to describe
 183 the servility and degradation which is imposed upon the
 fellahen not so much by their poverty as by the unceasing
 pressure of their masters. The fellah acts like a child or a
 brute because he is treated like one. He knows nothing of
 the upper class which rules him except its hard exterior.
 It is often said that the fellahen cannot understand an
 authority that is humane and appeals to their better instincts.
 This is true, but the reason is that they have been brought
 [651] up to nothing but blows, fines, insults, and bullying,
 which have finally rendered them insensible.

I myself, before I understood the meaning of human
 dignity, used the same harshness towards them, so natural
 and inevitable did it seem.

That the fellah's sense of justice is corrupt, that he lacks
 frankness, confidence, and eagerness is true, but this is
 because no-one has done anything to teach him these quali-
 ties or to give him any moral encouragement.

It is also true that his work is done without pleasure,
 without devotion and without style, that he has no taste
 for doing a job well, that he lacks initiative and inventive-

ness; but these defects are due to his servitude and isolation. In the words of El-Kolâly, his mind is walled-in between ignorance and tyranny. (2) 131
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Moreover the soil and the care of the soil make the fellah patient, long suffering and hard. The soil has imprinted on him something of its own earthiness. His very love is entirely physical, and yet he is not immoral.

He is taught from childhood that he comes from his mother's womb. His bad language when he is angry shows how much he knows of sexual matters. Even girls playing with dolls enact scenes of perfect realism. But this calm animal shamelessness has nothing in common with obscenity. Fundamental morality is not affected by it. The fact that everybody is watching everybody else, together with the conservative temperament and instinctive modesty of the fellahen, makes offences against morals fewer than elsewhere. As El-Kolâly says, 'Among the fellahen offences against morality represent only a small proportion of the total'. 131
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Poverty and tradition inure the fellah from his early days to the lack of all bodily ease. A comfortable bed, a pleasant home life, a good table, light company — these are things beyond his grasp. Their absence safeguards his morality. So do the precepts of Islam, it might be added; but the fellahen are very ignorant of their religion, and the Sheikh and Ulema do little to teach them. It is more probable that among these primitive people natural morality keeps its original force. 135
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137

The fellahen are moral because they believe in God. They are material, but not materialistic. They believe wholeheartedly in the intervention and providence of God. It is always "In sha Allah" — if it is God's will. They make no plan, undertake nothing without adding "In sha Allah". 137
138
139

A Greek merchant says to a fellah, "You'll bring me your cotton, then, tomorrow!"

"Yes, ya khaudga, (2) in sha Allah."

"Five cantars, not less. You understand!"

"Yes, in sha Allah."

"You'll be able to find the camels for them!"

"In sha Allah."

"I must have the goods before midday."

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"In sha Allah".

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"In sha Allah's no good. We're talking business, and I want a definite promise".

"No in sha Allah, no cotton, ya khaudja. Good day".

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181

'God will provide. God distributes His benefits. God protects the crops. God is with the patient. To everyone the fate which God has assigned him. We are from God, and to God we shall return. God is there. God will give in His own good time. Man proposes and God disposes. God tempers the wind to the shorn lamb.' Such are the sentences of peasant theology. They encourage fatalism and deepen resignation, but they are often rich with all the splendour of filial obedience to the Divine Will.

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The fellah believes in God as the Prime Mover and First of all Living. In spite of the poverty of his intellect, and his ignorance in matters of religion, his conception of God is admirably pure. God is the Almighty, the Just, the Good. All attributes are united in the word the peasant uses for God, *Rabbina*, our Lord and Master. To hear a fellah utter this word is to be convinced of his faith.

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The superstitions which enmesh his soul have not corrupted the essence of his faith. The fellaheen are far more given to prayer and asceticism than other people, for they are by nature believers. They have always been powerfully attracted by sacredness (*baraka*), the supernatural, holiness, or even the appearance of those things.

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The Catholics among the fellaheen, whom the writer knows best, can be splendidly religious in their lives, even to the point of heroism. Those of their priests who are fellaheen live among them and for them with a devotion and self-denial of which missionaries from Europe would rarely be capable. It must not be forgotten that the first monks of the Christian world, the monks of the Thobaid, were fellaheen ("").

CHAPTER X

THE FELLAH AND PROGRESS

In the great square in front of Cairo station stands a massive group of statuary hewn from Aswan granite. It represents the Sphinx rising on its forefeet, with a woman standing beside it, her hand on the nape of its neck, and her veil raised. This is *The Reawakening of Egypt*, by an Egyptian sculptor, Mukhtar.

During the last half century Egypt has made more progress than any other Near Eastern or Islamic country. Politically she has become independent first of Turkey and then of England, and established herself as a sovereign State. This evolution has been made possible by the birth and growth in a whole class of the idea of nationality and a consciousness of the destiny of the Egyptian nation. Since 1923 the Kingdom of Egypt has had Ambassadors and Consuls abroad, a purely Egyptian Government, a parliamentary life and an opposition, universal suffrage and political parties with electoral programmes, ministries and a more and more specialised civil service — in short the whole paraphernalia of a modern state.

Nevertheless this political life affects only a tenth of the total population. The fellahen, who constitute the remaining nine-tenths of passive and unorganised citizens, take no more part in it now than formerly, when Turks or English ruled the country.

They are either ignorant of the existence of all these new ideas we have just mentioned, or they have no understanding of them. They are Wafdists if you like — that is to say, members of the Nationalist Party — in the sense that the 'Omda or the political agents have written their names in the party lists, but they are neither active members nor even supporters in the way Russian peasants would be, for example. No-one has taught them their rights and privileges. Demo-

F
184 cratic forms can never have been so misleading. But
665 that is not the worst evil, as we shall see.

E
652 The economic progress of Egypt is as striking as its
479 political development. The country's financial prosperity
651 is remarkable. Even before the war the State had a gold
reserve of thirty million pounds, and between 1923 and 1935
it almost doubled. The budget never shows a deficit. The
constant increase of revenues from the Customs and the
railways, the capital of the limited companies, both foreign
and Egyptian, the development of local industry (the Bank
Misr companies employ 200,000 men), the place of Egyptian
cotton on the world's market, the improved quality of the
crops, the systematic extension of perennial irrigation and
therefore of agricultural production — all these are signs
of prosperity.

F
178 But this progress has resulted in no increased well-
being for the fellah. His standard of life and his methods
of work have remained unchanged, for all this progress was
based on his labour. His ignorance and stagnation were the
conditions for this capitalist prosperity.

F
[248] 'The so-called rich crops', wrote an economist some time
249 ago, 'that is to say cotton and sugar-cane, will not fail to in-
fluence the evolution of the fellahen, since the one develops
capital, which will effect an improvement in agriculture, and
the other industry, which will sharpen the fellah's wits by
the use of machinery.'

F
511 In fact, neither capital nor industry has helped the
fellahen. Both before and after the boom of 1920 their
financial affairs were as bad and their poverty as great as a
hundred or a thousand years ago. There are even signs, and
that in official reports (''), of a lowering of the standard of
living. It is the fashion to attribute this to the increase
in the population, though 'Aly Shamsy Pasha also cites
'the unequal distribution of agricultural wealth' (''). In the
midst of this poverty in prosperity there are still landowners
whose incomes are L.E. 12,000 to L.E. 15,000 a year.

F
183 Yet here again the evil must not be exaggerated. There
may be something worse than poverty — ignorance.

E
873 The intellectual revival of Egypt has been dazzling.
Under the reign of Fuad I especially, learned institutions
were multiplied. The Fuad I University, which did not
exist twenty-five years ago, has today nearly 10,000 students,

and new Faculties and Departments have been created.^{E 873}
 In 1942 a second University was founded, at Alexandria.
 The Government's primary and secondary schools count ^E
 their pupils by hundreds of thousands, and are endowed ^[872]
 with all the latest improvements. Then there are nu-
 merous private schools of older foundation. Even the
 ancient Moslem University of Al-Azhar has felt the wind
 of reform, and has established new branches, the Insti-
 tutes of Shubra, Tanta, Assiut, and Qena. Three
 thousand teachers are busy with elementary education in
 the villages. Egyptian publications, whether newspapers,
 reviews, or books, compare in style and content with the
 best in Europe, and are a model for all the Arabic-speaking
 countries. Yet the most important newspaper, *Al-Ahram*,
 the *Times* of the Near East, has a daily circulation of not
 more than 100,000, and the farmers' review, *Zamil el-*^{E 204}
Fellah, which is published by the Ministry of Agriculture ^{214]}
 and distributed free, prints only 48,000 copies. ^[658]

The scientists, scholars, and men of letters who come to
 Egypt every year for congresses or conferences find in Cairo
 or Alexandria audiences as eager and open-minded as those
 of Paris. They are astonished and say so. ^{E 814}
⁸¹⁵

Thinkers and students are busy creating a national
 language, a national music, a national theatre and cinema,
 something which shall be specifically Egyptian, and not
 just vaguely Islamic. It is very interesting to follow this
 development of culture. But we must turn aside to see
 what is happening below. ^{E 812}
⁸¹⁴
⁶⁴¹
¹⁷⁸

Have the masses been caught up in this tide of renewal?
 Are they following the élite of the cities? The answer is:
 either not at all or at such a distance that no movement is
 discernible. Illiteracy still prevails among an overwhelm-
 ing majority. The latest statistics have had to recognise
 it. (") It may be that the fault lies with the English, who
 developed everything in Egypt except education; with the
 fellaheen themselves, who are not very gifted and show no
 eagerness to learn; or with a syllabus ill-adapted to their
 mentality and forced upon them with compulsory educa-
 tion. Whatever the cause the fact remains that 95% of
 the fellaheen can neither read nor write. Even if they know
 how to read, they remain strangers to all interchange of
^{E 369}
¹⁷⁸
²¹²
^{E 636}
¹⁸¹
⁸⁷¹
^{F 212}

212 ideas, for the literary language in which books and newspapers are written is unfamiliar to them (¹¹).

184 The weakness and the sufferings of the fellahen arise from their abysmal ignorance in a fast-progressing world. The revival which has just been described only accentuates their isolation and dependence.

178 At the same time, if within the mass no substantial changes can be recorded, outside it some progress may be seen, and inside there are some signs of future evolution.

There is a certain growth in the sense of social responsibility. Progressive Egypt is beginning to pay some attention to unprogressive Egypt, clumsily it may be, by fits and starts, and as yet more in theory than in practice, but at least with the desire to help those who cannot help themselves.

641 Today the fellah has legal rights. He is no longer sub-
466 ject to forced labour at the good pleasure of his masters.
671 There is a code of law, and judges to apply it. It is true that the fellah does not always know how to make use of this, but the law exists, where formerly there was no defence.

641 'To put an end to the cruelty of the pasha, to let the
636 fellah's wife and frightened child have what belongs to them', such was the work of Lord Cromer at the end of the nineteenth century (¹²). This High Commissioner, who gave much thought to the fellahen, used all his power to obtain for them at least strict justice. The lash was made illegal, and
[65] taxes were fixed at reasonable rates and periods. The fellah
[68] is no longer in constant terror of the *sarraf*. He knows
[73] how much he has to pay, and realises that if his field has suffered from flood, drought or fire, the tax is remitted.
66] The venality of officials and the selfishness of big landowners often nullify the benefits of these measures. But they have their effect.

In 1912 Lord Cromer's successor, Lord Kitchener, also caused a law to be passed in favour of the fellah, whereby the dwelling of the small farmer, his necessary implements, two of his cattle and five feddans were exempt from seizure. To make the fellah's finances sounder and accustom him to some kind of system the same High Commissioner established Savings Banks in the villages, where the fellah was to
[453] keep his savings. This institution, perhaps because it was

compulsory, met with little success, and had to be suppressed after the last war. 641
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In 1902, after a trial by the National Bank, the Agricultural Bank of Egypt was founded, with the object of providing loans to small farmers at the legal rate of 9%. It opened agencies in all the principal townships, and enjoyed the privilege of being repaid before the taxes. At first it was a success. But the formalities were too complicated, the agencies too far from borrowers in the small villages, the date of repayment too rigidly insisted on, and the whole transaction too public. The fellah preferred to fall back on his moneylender, who was on the spot. 453
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The success of the Agricultural Bank might indeed have been greater if the application of the Five-Feddin Law, by making mortgages impossible, had not dealt it a fatal blow. From the date of this Act the bank abandoned its earlier policy, and in 1930 it went into liquidation.

The system was revived in an improved form in 1931, with the creation of the *Crédit Agricole d'Egypte*, founded by the Government with the co-operation of the big Cairo banks. To assist its operations the Government agreed to advance a million pounds and suspended the Five-Feddin Law in its favour. 657
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The new institution gives advances to small-holders at 7% and to co-operative societies at 5% up to the amounts required for cultivation and harvesting, for the purchase of cattle, and for the improvement of land. It sells selected seeds and manures on credit to small tenant farmers and share-croppers, and advances them up to 80 % of the value of their crops, if these are deposited in the bank's *shoonas*, scattered all over the country. Understanding the fellah mentality, and profiting by the experience of the Agricultural Bank, it has decentralised its operations, leaving fairly wide powers of discretion to its agents, who go into the villages and reduce formalities to a minimum. It has thus won the confidence of the fellaheen and drawn many of them out of the clutches of the moneylenders, without itself suffering in any way from its own creditors. Nevertheless, it is already tending more and more to help the middle and larger landowners.

The reader will have noted the special conditions granted by the *Crédit Agricole* to co-operative societies. These have 474

474 existed in Egypt for the last twenty years. The Government recognised them officially by the Law of 1923 (amended in 1927). It made advances to encourage their development and enable them to buy seed, manure, cattle, and implements, on better terms. Since 1931 it has entrusted this task to the *Crédit Agricole*. The change was successful. The number of societies grew from 147 in 1927 to 703 in 1935, and the number of co-operators rose from 12,298 to 71,000. In 1935 L.E. 836,000 was borrowed from the *Crédit Agricole* by 544 of these societies, the others being financed by private capital.

The advantages of these societies are evident. They do away with shady middlemen, systematise production and prices, improve both quality and quantity, and buy and sell at the best conditions (?). They have a clearly-defined aim of social service. "The various types of co-operative societies, put aside part of their profit every year to be spent in the various social services, village reform, education, hygiene" and so on.

It is in Lower Egypt, and especially Beheira, that these organisations have spread most. In spite of their success they leave untouched the vast majority of the fellaheen, especially those whose need is greatest and among whom the co-operative spirit is least developed.

656 The Government has passed a number of measures for the protection of these grown-up children :

[426] (1) The law against moneylenders (1896) by which the usurer, who goes too far, is made liable to a heavy fine.

[59] (2) The establishment of *kaldka* cotton markets (1912) in which weights are checked and sales governed by current prices at the Bourse.

[65] (3) The suppression of the tax on date-palms (1920).

(4) The suppression of the *ghaffir* tax, a watchman's toll which the fellaheen had to pay (1936).

744 If the fellah's economic activity needs to be organised
657 and controlled by the paternal providence of the State, how much more do his health and his housing ! But here planning is far ahead of achievement. The question is whether to begin by providing all villages with drinking-water, or first to build model villages whenever possible.

Today only 25% of the population, that is to say the 271 inhabitants of the towns, drink pure water. A few new 312 waterworks are established from time to time. In 1940 the whole *mudiriya* of the Fayûm, the furthest from the Nile, was fitted up with a model installation. But the fellahen are still slow to make use of these benefits. For example at Nekhêla, a big village of 20,000 souls near Abu Tig, a drinking-water supply was recently introduced by the progressive local Council. The women have to pay one millieme to fill a petrol tin or *ballas* at the public tap. But they prefer to use the river-water, which is abundant and free of charge. *Ghaffirs* have had to be posted to prevent them from doing so and to force them to profit by the progress they scorn.

The creation of model villages has been more tempting 361 to Governments. Mohammed Aly over a century ago 185 established a dozen places on a rectilinear plan to serve as 654 examples for others. Unfortunately the example of the unplanned villages was stronger, and today these places are scarcely distinguishable from the rest.

In 1914 the Khedive Abbas II inaugurated three rectilinear villages, each containing 180 houses, 169 of which were for the fellahen and the rest for public services. Each dwelling consisted of two rooms and a yard. This experiment also failed, as the tenants modified the houses to suit their needs.

Nevertheless, after a twenty years' interval opinion is again turning to model villages. At the desire of the late King Fuad the farms on the Royal Domains have built for the labourers working on them symmetrical rows of houses with only a ground floor. They look like prisons to us, but to the fellahen they are palaces.

Similar constructions have been planned or copied by a fair number of landowners, who have built cell-like dwellings of red or unbaked bricks for the fellahen on their *'ezbas*.

The most interesting achievement, however, is that of the *'ezba* of Bahteem, belonging to the Royal Agricultural Society. The first part, finished in 1934, comprises thirty houses for workers and three for officials, together with public buildings. The dwellings run from north to south in five rows, and each row is divided into two groups by a street, widening into a square in the middle. Between each pair of

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rows there is a street six yards wide, so that sunlight can penetrate into every dwelling.

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The houses are of red brick, with concrete ceilings, and the floors inside are raised a foot above street level. The roof is about thirteen feet from the ground. Twenty of the houses are two-roomed, with a yard inside and a shed for cattle. Ten larger houses have three rooms, with a hall and outhouses. These are occupied by two families each, usually those of a father and his son.

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Six baking-ovens have been built outside the housing-area, so that the smoke may not trouble the inhabitants. They are used by all the families in turn. There are also six shower-baths, four for men and two for women, together with laundry facilities.

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The village hall will hold seventy people; it is used for feasts, marriages and funerals. The mosque covers about 600 square feet. The school, which follows the syllabus for compulsory elementary education, is open to boys and girls. Shops have been opened in order that the people may buy what they want on the spot, and there is a great enclosure with six depots for storing the various crops, fodder for the animals, and agricultural implements.

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Water to fill the tanks is drawn from a well by a pumping machine. But this was an expensive experiment, costing L.E. 10,000, and could not be copied by private persons. Something more economical had to be found, which without sacrificing public health would be better adapted to the habits of the fellaheen. In 1935 the Royal Agricultural Society laid a new experiment before the landowners. Twenty houses of different kinds were built in blocks of four, separated by twenty-foot roads. Here the walls are of unbaked brick, and the roof of wood. There are two rooms about fifteen feet by twelve, a small yard, and an inside oven. Each dwelling costs L.E. 25 as against the L.E. 125 of the first plan.

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The Government, for its part, has decided to build a model village in each *mudiriya*, beginning with the rebuilding of Mit Fares in Lower Egypt, which was destroyed by fire. The plan allows for houses of one or two stories with drinking-water and interior drainage; wide streets lined with trees; in the centre a mosque, a school, and a hall for meetings; and on the outskirts a market-place for the

weekly fair, stores for wood, manure, and grain, and a fire station. Twenty thousand people are to live in this paradise, which will cover 45 feddans. The plan has not yet been carried out (11). 654
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A single model village in the middle of a vast area is a drop in the ocean. Few people can either benefit by it or copy it. It would be better to spend the money on more useful projects such as supplying the villages with drinking-water. The benefit would be more wide-spread, say the advocates of this policy, and avoid the injustice of creating inequalities among villages. Why should one be chosen for a model, and others remain in their old squalor? A five-year plan was suggested for rebuilding the four thousand villages of Egypt at an estimated cost of thirty million pounds. This sum appears both moderate and feasible, when it is remembered that the Egyptian Government has spent forty-five millions on dams and irrigation work. The plan was given up, however, on account of the heavy expenses incurred under the Treaty of 1936, and perhaps also owing to the lack of public spirit (12). 653
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The Commission set up for the reform of the medieval system of *'omdas* and for the betterment of conditions in the countryside has proposed the establishment of municipal councils in which the fellahen should take part. There are already such bodies in existence in about sixty townships. They are composed of the Mudir or the Mâmûr, the Inspector of Public Health, four elected members, and others nominated by the Ministry of the Interior.

Another institution, as yet not much developed, is that of the Village Councils, which were begun in 1918 and now operate in about seventy places. Their composition is similar, but their financial scope is very narrow. These bodies are limited in their activities to the watering of the principal streets (which does not do away with the mud), the construction of small public gardens (in which nobody may walk, for fear of spoiling them), and the erection of a few street lights. They might well be more representative of the village. Even if the *'omda*, instead of being nominated, were elected by his fellow-villagers, would that give him civic ideals? Specialised officials might be appointed to the village, such as a doctor, a visiting nurse, an agricultural expert, and a trained social worker. Or should the first aim be 623
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744 to provide public conveniences, in the effort to combat the diseases which lessen the fellah's output? The Ministry of Public Health, founded in 1934, has given this question priority in its programme, but it has not a large budget, and most of its income goes to pay the salaries of its officials. It has, however, some genuine achievements to its credit. Sixty-seven dispensaries, permanent or travelling, are fighting bilharzia and ankylostomiasis. There are as many hospitals, with about four thousand beds in all, for serious illnesses. In 1936 there were 111 eye-clinics, which had treated 1,133,599 patients. Infant welfare is organised in some forty centres. Doctors, midwives, and visiting nurses, instead of waiting for the peasant woman to come and ask for help, go round from house to house to give treatment and advice. At least half a million visits have been made. By 1937 there were about five thousand certified midwives, who had taken a six months' course in a maternity hospital, and eight thousand of the second class, who had from three to six weeks' training.

744 To these splendid efforts must be added the even more devoted labours of private institutions: the dispensaries and home visits of the Franciscan Sisters of Egypt and the many other Catholic sisterhoods, the Protestant foundations, such as the C.M.S. and the American Mission, and the more recent and methodical 'social centres' established in a dozen villages in the Delta.

It is a vast field, and these efforts up to the present have affected only thousands out of millions. Even those fortunate few often lose the benefit of their medical treatment through their ignorance, their unhygienic habits, and their poverty. These are the obstacles to progress.

183 744 A model village has no power to make the fellah a healthy man, immune from sickness. The work of the authorities in the provinces is hardly more successful. So long as the fellah keeps his present ways of thought and the ignorance that hinders him from knowing what is good for him and what is not, he will remain, in spite of all the improvements that are offered him, exactly as he is today. He will refuse
[271] filtered water and drink the impure water his fathers drank.
356 Give him a light, airy, healthy dwelling, and he will pervert it to his own manner of life. He will still be unable to
183 profit from the laws and institutions provided to help him.

The first and most urgent need, let it be said again, is ¹⁸³ education.

"It is my opinion that every reform which is not found-¹⁸⁵ ed on the education of the people is destined to fail, or at least²⁰³ to take a very long time—and the people's time is precious.

"Nothing will ever come of building model villages, or of using the cinema and the wireless to give advice on health and social matters, unless the people are educated and enabled to make use of all these things." (Article in Al-Mussawar No. 800 by 'Abdel-Qader Hamza Pasha, Senator, 1940.)

Many influential people, however, sincerely believe¹⁸³ that to educate the fellah would be to make him unhappy,¹⁸⁵ and that his present state of insensibility and habituation¹⁸⁷ is best for him. He does not suffer so much as one might think, for he does not know what he lacks. To teach him would mean to waken in him demands for comfort and amusement which he could not satisfy, and which would give him a distaste for work on the land. Then what would become of Egypt? In 1933 a Member of Parliament maintained that the education of the masses was undesirable, and suicidal for Egypt. Many large landowners think the same.

This may well be so, if by education is meant the wholly unsuitable programme to be found in the official syllabus of compulsory education. There is no sense in teaching the fellah practices which are useless in the country-side, and are based on purely Western ideas. "This teaching does not give results in proportion to its cost. The Commission therefore advises a radical reorganisation based on a recognition of the need to prepare the young for country life, so as to raise the standard of agricultural production" ("). As for the fellah's distaste for the farm's driving him to the city, this movement comes more from continual poverty than¹⁶⁶ from such teaching. The fellah migrates to the town only because he hopes to earn enough there to enable him to return to the land.

It must be said that no depopulation of the countryside¹⁶² has yet been noted. The 1937 census shows a stationary¹⁶⁶ figure for the rural population, in spite of the increased birth rate and the relative decrease of mortality. On the other¹⁸⁴ hand, in the less illiterate villages, and among fellaheen who have returned after a long stay in the city — poorer

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184 or richer, but at least with their eyes opened — a certain distaste is noticeable for the hard toil of the fields.

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162 In 1937 there were in Cairo 188,000 persons of Upper Egyptian origin, and 200,000 from the provinces of Lower Egypt, an increase of over 150,000 in ten years. The
166 mudiriya of Assiut had lost 50,000 to the capital, and Menufiya, the most thickly populated province, more than 70,000. These figures are an indication not so much of the spread of education, as of poverty and overcrowding.

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186 A glance at the fellah colonies established in Cairo shows that they form veritable villages, grouped according to their place of origin in odd quarters of the capital such as Sharabiya or Kolaly. They keep to themselves, meet at special cafés, and cling to their country customs as long as possible. Generally it is the men that have migrated, leaving their wives and children in the villages; which proves
166 that they hope to return. They find work most often as building labourers, taken on for the day by a *rayess*; they
464 are better paid than in the fields (about P.T. 5 a day, pre-war rate), but just as badly treated, and always in
465 danger of unemployment.

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166 After a few years' experience some come back to their native places poorer than ever, or perhaps well enough off to buy the plot of land they dreamed of. Others settle in the
464 city and work as navvies, porters, servants, or hawkers, fastening like flies on to the wealth of the city, just as the
511 hovels they live in cling to the edges of the better quarters. They form a parasitic growth which never becomes part of the city. Some few manage to worm their way in, and develop into big merchants, contractors, or brokers; but they are not in the least interested in improving the quarter from which they came. They trample on their old associates instead of helping them to rise.

The distress of the fellah remains.

CONCLUSION

THE DISTRESS OF THE FELLAH

In comparison with the fellah's miserable lot a century ¹⁷⁸ ago or under the Mamelukes, his present situation is an un-⁵¹¹ doubted improvement. He can no longer be killed like a ⁷³⁵ dog, plundered at will, or commandeered as a slave.

In comparison with the woes of the negro, Malagasy, ^[17] Chinese, or Tonkinese peasant, the fellah might seem even more fortunate. He is undernourished but does not die of hunger. He has clothes to wear, and, when holidays come round, money to spend on amusements.

True, but there are two kinds of poverty. There is ⁷³⁵ physical poverty, which means insufficiency of resources ¹⁸⁵ and a lack of the conditions necessary for the maintenance and development of physical health; and there is intellectual and moral poverty, which means ignorance and a lack of human dignity, no less essential to the life of the spirit.

Physical poverty has a more immediate effect on the worker and, precisely because it is more noticeable, arouses more pity. Hence all these efforts to improve the fellah's house, his health, and his finances. Hence also the habitual tone of his complaints, and of the speeches made about him. "This is no new question, but a subject that has figured in every Speech from the Throne since the beginnings of our parliament. We are not suffering from a diversity of evils, each of which can be treated separately, but from a single fundamental evil, and that is the low standard of life of the masses of the people in the countryside; a standard so low that it offends all human feelings, and stains the reputation of our country. The people of Egypt is not composed of those 160 or 200 thousand persons who are comparatively well off, but of sixteen million souls" (19).

In this low standard of living we must also include moral ⁵¹¹ poverty, which since it affects the very sources of human life ⁷³⁵

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735 is of graver consequence for the individual than for the group. In this poverty the fellah is too rich.

181 His ignorance and backwardness, his churlishness and servility, which contrast so strikingly with the refinement of the upper classes, are more tragic than his lack of means.

The fact that he does not feel the depth of his suffering is no reason why it should seem any the less degrading. On the contrary, when he feels it more keenly and becomes fully conscious of it, his deliverance will be on the way.

184 The real evils, then, are the fellah's lack of education
212 and culture, and the incomprehension or inaptitude, if not
656 scorn and indifference, of those who might be helping him.

746 The greater number of official measures, for example, are thought out in offices quite remote from the fellaheen, and put into practice by officials who have nothing of the countryman in them. Whether they are concerned with health or education, agriculture or justice, they spring more from theory or from imitation of other countries than from a practical knowledge of the true state of affairs. Their starting-point is not the way of life and thought of the fellah, but a preconceived ideal. They are too interfering, and are imposed on the fellah in a hard, threatening manner. They are planted on him from outside, without ever arousing his interest or enlisting his help, so that he is unable to believe that the Government is genuinely trying to do him a service. And his distress remains the same as ever.

747 Here lies the explanation of the amazing series of failures which makes the pessimists say "It is no use doing anything for the fellaheen". Experience shows, however, that private organisations of limited scope and resources, because they are working *with* the fellah and not merely *for* him, because they advise instead of commanding, and promise instead of threatening, have been able to gain his confidence, and in spite of unavoidable false starts have achieved excellent results.

One example is the model village of the Royal Agricultural Society, mentioned in the previous chapter. The finishing touch was put to this in December 1941 by the establishment of a 'Social Centre'.

Another case is the happy experiment tried on a large 'ezba of 1600 feddans in Beheira, where the landowner, a

Greek, not satisfied with building good houses of red brick and concrete at L.E. 120 each, has arranged for a dentist and a doctor to come every week from the town. He has established a model school, and, best of all, has engaged an assistant for social work. This young Egyptian woman, the first to hold a diploma from the Alexandria School of Social Service, lives not in the owner's villa or the *názer's* house but among the fellaheen and close to the school, in a little room which she has fitted up charmingly. At 8 a.m. she opens her dispensary, and at 9 a.m. pays a medical visit to the school. Then she makes a round of the houses, gently discouraging dirt and disorder. She keeps a card-index of each family, and records its progress. She brings the girls together for lessons in child-welfare and sewing, and in the evening assembles the men to tell them stories and teach them how to amuse themselves in their spare time. 747 744

At the end of the first year, thanks to the fact that this service was continuous and close at hand, the women of the *'ezba* were washing themselves once a week, though they used only to take a bath once a year. This is because Doreyya did not make speeches to them about bath-tubs and shower-baths, but simply used what every peasant woman has at hand in her home, the *tisht*, the *halla* and the *kúz*. [515]

Then there is the earlier example of a remarkable *ab'adiya* (isolated farm) in the *márkaz* of Simbellawain. This 400-feddan estate, worked by direct cultivation, has been made by its *názer*, an Alsatian of good peasant stock who has been living and working there for twenty-seven years, into a paradise of order and health. The fellaheen are lodged in thirty-six small houses varying in size according to the number of children. They are built of red brick, with wooden roofs. The inside is newly white-washed every year. Nothing is kept on the roof, but each family has an adjoining patch of land, defined by an imaginary line, where dry brushwood and manure are heaped. Nobody encroaches on another's space. The labourers are paid three and a half to four piastres more than on neighbouring estates. They are each allowed one or two feddans for their requirements of maize or berseem, and almost every family owns a donkey and a goat, and either a calf or a *gamoossa*. Once a year everyone receives a new garment at the owner's 747 361 [342] [311] 241 [291] 431

747 expense, which amounts to about L.E. 70. These *galla-*
 361 *biyas* are not distributed anyhow, but fitted individually by
 291 the *ndzer's* wife, according to height and taste. At the
 431 Bairam festival there is a general distribution of meat, four
 pounds to a person, which costs about L.E. 40. Fat is
 also given to those who have no *gamoossa*. The fruit crop
 of the orchard is shared out at intervals. Whenever a child
 is born, a set of baby-clothes is provided.

[426] When a fellah gets into debt, the *ndzer* advances him
 what he needs, without any trickery. The man pays it off
 by days of work.

[312] Drinking-water is supplied to all from a pump at the
 515] entrance to the '*ezba*'. A dozen lavatories and two shower-
 baths have been set up near the mosque.

This beautiful mosque, built by the Christian landowner,
 who also provides for an *imam*, brings together the menfolk
 [346] of the '*ezba*' and its surroundings. A *kuttab* was attached
 794] to it, but this has been closed since the opening of an
ilzamiya school in the next village.

[759] Fellaheen who go sick are cared for by the *ndzer*, who
 743] has by practice become something of a doctor, or sent to the
 Government doctor at Mit Ghamr. The wife of this kindly
 manager, when she was there, used to take care of the
 people herself, wash their eyes, and give them clothes and
 good habits too. For twenty-four years she stood at her
 husband's side.

[152] When she died, they showed that fellaheen are not in-
 187] capable of gratitude. They discovered by childish tricks,
 in spite of efforts to keep the truth from them, that she was
 seriously ill in Cairo. Thirty of them piled into a couple of
 taxis and drove off to the hospital. It was like a public
 demonstration, people said. Later, when they saw the *ndzer*
 and his children coming back in mourning from the
 cemetery, their grief was as spontaneous as it was general.

This mother left her daughter an example to follow.
 And follow it she does, with her gentleness and good temper
 and her mastery of Arabic. It is easy to see how much they
 love her, those unloved peasants.

This experiment in social justice has not made either
 the owner or the *ndzer* any the poorer. The estate is one of
 the most productive in Egypt, and all its products have won
 prizes at agricultural exhibitions.

Another such enterprise is the holiday scheme of five ⁷⁴⁷ young Egyptian women at Kolossana in Upper Egypt ^{(11). 872}. "Two cousins of mine, my two sisters and myself", says one of them, whose report we are quoting, "opened our little school at the beginning of July 1933. The Government school was too far from the village and on the other side of a dangerous level-crossing. Our premises, which consist of two rooms kindly lent by a lady, are in the middle of the village.

"When the school was opened, apparatus and supplies were quite inadequate. In spite of this we set to work and took sixty children, mostly girls, between six and seventeen years of age. At first, keeping order was troublesome, but little by little things improved.

"We taught reading and writing, manual work, and games. The roll was called every morning.

"By giving prizes for regularity, we kept up attendances to 70%. The following year, when we had 170 on our books, the percentage was 80.

"We made real progress in both reading and writing, and still more in cleanliness. Sham jewellery disappeared, faces were washed every morning, and the children kept their hair clean. An anti-fly campaign was organised.

"Every day we used to put eyes, drops in the children's ^[757] and children with serious trouble were sent to the oculist. On Friday, though there was no school, the children came for a health inspection, and were given a cake of soap and some hair-wash.

"We gave the boys drawing-lessons, in which we had to teach them how to distinguish colours, and the girls sewing-lessons, in which we showed them how to make dresses.

"We found difficulty at first in organising games, but ^[524] it was not very long before the children began to understand and keep the rules."

This experiment lasted for three years. Unfortunately it came to an end with the departure of young women who had undertaken it.

The experience of school teachers with their pupils, ⁷⁴⁷ and of landowners with their tenants or share-croppers, teaches them that the progress or regression of the fellah depends largely on themselves. Some make real efforts

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747 to be humane. This is shown by a growing number of articles in the Egyptian Press, as well as by, for instance, a recent film-production entitled *Asifa 'ala-l-Rif* (Storm over the Village), which deals courageously with the problem of the fellah and his masters.

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747 It is none the less clear that the educated classes have neglected their responsibilities. They have turned away from the masses and devoted themselves to politics, literature, or European travel. They have been self-centred or, as some would say, unpatriotic enough to keep their culture and their wealth strictly to themselves. It is true that every now and again from their ivory tower they have commended enthusiastically the earthy qualities of the fellah, but they have never done much to help him. The occasional meetings of the governing classes with the fellaheen have something theatrical about them, and what is theatrical is obviously not real.

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184 A member said lately in the Chamber "In this country, when a Prime Minister visits a village, he is accompanied by an escort of some three hundred soldiers, not to mention officers and high officials. Under such conditions he cannot get into touch with the people of the place or find out what they really need" (**). The honourable member went on to suggest that ministers should find out for themselves the true state of the people.

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748 Thus the fellah, like a neglected child who grows up without thinking or learning anything, has remained rooted to the ground. The earth has stopped him from sinking yet lower; it has preserved and sustained him, but it could not elevate him. The essential need of the fellaheen is to be awakened and revived to their heritage of humanity.

This is the task of the upper classes, and especially of those who are most concerned with the land: landowners, agricultural engineers, and all who live in the country or visit it in the course of their work, such as merchants, bank-employees, and Government officials. These people should no longer confine themselves to economic administration or political relations with the fellaheen, but should also make an effort to create disinterested human contacts. This is the only way to do any good. It is noticeable how much encouragement the fellaheen derive from the simplest of visits to our village schools by notables or townspeople,

provided these show real cordiality and interest and have come to see the fellaheen for their own sake. 183
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The same task belongs, by virtue of their very function, to teachers and ministers of religion, who enter more deeply into the life of the village. Whoever assists them in their work shows the most intelligent form of patriotism.

The wives and daughters of landowners are also specially called to this task. One young girl of good family who spends her holidays in the country and is sensitive to the people's needs has been able quite alone to gather all the fellaheen of the 'ezba and, by telling them stories every evening, to educate them and generally raise their standards. This is true feminism at work.

The essential problem, then, is to undertake and carry through a task of education and enlightenment, which is more a matter of personal understanding and personal service than of committees, speeches and official decrees.

The only thing that can awaken without exciting, help without weakening, free without uprooting the fellaheen is a socially-minded and altruistic spirit in the upper classes. It is from above that a beginning must be made.

There could be no fitter conclusion to this book than a quotation from the great Pope Pius XI (11):

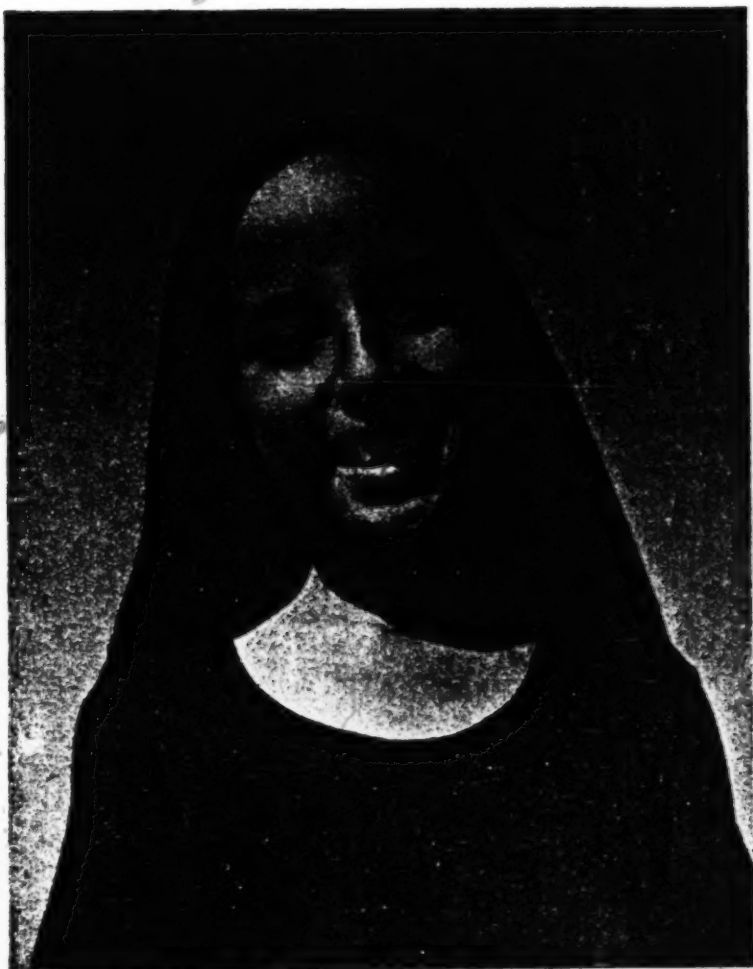
"Your duty is to afford the worker both material and spiritual help : material help, by so acting that not only legal justice may work on his behalf, but also social justice; that is to say, that he may benefit from all those institutions that have as their aim the betterment of the conditions of the working classes : spiritual help, by giving them the aid of religion, without which they will live immersed in a brutalising and degrading materialism There are millions of human beings living in conditions so pitiful and so wretched that they do not even enjoy the minimum of well-being necessary for the preservation of human dignity."

[page 160 is blank]

3: Ayrout M-5 (ca. 1935) 1945

MR13 Fellahin MR13

142
241



When they are happy

Page 160 (A)

3: Ayrout M-5 (ca. 1935) 1945

MR13 Fellahin MR13

PEASANT FUNERALS

764
133
291



Men and Women

A PEASEANT FAMILY

515
585
292
352
231
415



A head toilet.



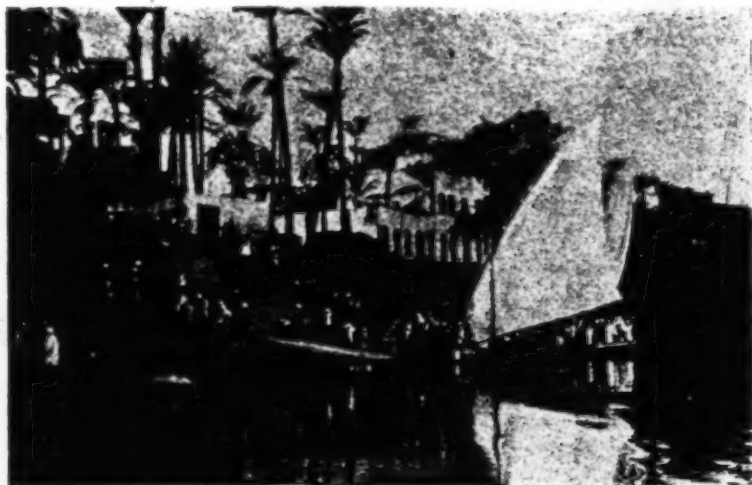
The wedding procession

3: Ayrout M-5 (ca. 1935) 1945

MR13 Fellahin MR13

A PEASANT GROOP

(Ch VI)



501
361
342
504

A village and ferry on the Nile



291

With them

Page 160(C)

3: Ayrout M-5 (ca. 1935) 1945

MR13 Fellahin MR13

WORK OF THE FELLAH

(Ch. IV)

311
474
291
133



Digging ditches

248
133



Putting the harvested cotton into sacks

APPENDIX A

A NOTE ON MOURNING CUSTOMS

Both Christians and Moslems, at the feasts of Christmas^C and Easter, or the Little and Great Bairam^F (""), have a cus-⁷⁶⁵
tom of going to pray at the tombs of their dead. On these⁷⁶⁹
days the cemetery takes on the appearance of a market, in^C
which people of all conditions meet together. Families are^F
continuously arriving. The camel is used to transport the²⁹²
provisions, bedding, boxes and kitchen-ware. Sometimes⁵⁰⁵
the Nile has to be crossed. The people crowd pell-mell into
ferry boats, weighing them down till they are almost awash.
The children, with their best clothes on, are delighted with
the journey, but the women are weeping. When they visit^C
the cemetery for the first time after a burial they cry out in^F
grief, calling on the dead. Some of them stain their faces¹⁵²
with blue and wave their handkerchiefs. I have seen old³⁰²
women scarcely able to walk and broken down by age and⁹⁸⁷
sickness, dragging themselves on this funeral pilgrimage,
which they feel obliged to make, and from which they may
never return.

Then the blood of sacrifice flows over the tomb, and the^C
meat is given to the poor. Such libations and charitable^F
offerings are supposed to comfort the souls of the dead.⁷⁸²
The goats and sheep, feeling their end approaching, cry aloud
in despair. Yet in the dazzling sunshine, the clouds of dust,
the tumult of the crowd, there is something of the holiday^C
spirit. Hawkers temptingly display their wares, little cafés^F
are opened, swings draw the children away. The families²⁶⁵
separate, each to visit its own. The upper part of the tomb⁴⁴³
is often built into a dome or living-space. Here the family⁷⁶⁴
will settle itself, to weep for hour after hour, or to sleep.
Happy are the dead who are remembered, and happier still
those for whom prayers are said.

When someone dies in the village, there is always a^C
mandara (sitting-room) or a tent where the people go to offer^F
⁷⁶⁴

^C
^F
764 their sympathy to the dead man's family. The space set apart for the women is filled with wailing, but the men await the visitors in solemn silence. Everyone stands up at a new arrival, and greets him with a good wish.

^C
^F
574 "The remainder to your life", they say, meaning "What-
764 ever is out off from his life, may God add it to yours, and give you a long life." The answer is "Life is God's". Everyone sits down without more ado. Then, as if he had been searching the depths of his soul for the right words, the newcomer breaks the silence. He quotes sayings, proverbs, or passages from the Holy Books, consoling sentences about the inevitability of death, resignation to the will of God, the holy life of the deceased, the rewards promised to the just, and the courage which men should show in bereavement. One saying calls forth another and one passage is echoed by another of the same kind. Tongues are loosened. The orators show their skill. It is curious to see how much sympathy is shown on the occasion of a death. To comfort the bereaved, folk think nothing of a three hours' walk or the loss of a day's work.

Friends sit up all night with the family, giving the comfort of their presence and their ready help. Death is the great leveller, and provides a centre of attraction. Religious differences disappear and social classes come closer together. Moslems and Christians meet one another in commemoration of the dead ; rich and poor are united around a tomb.

E. Fellert, S.J. (*Minia*)

APPENDIX B

DIRGE FOR A YOUNG MAN

1. Men and women, he who is absent has a friend, a friend
Who has passed his life in tears and lamentation.
Men and women, he who is absent has a friend whom
he grieves,
Whom he wounds to the heart on a day most bitter.
2. Men and women, he who is absent has a friend who
weeps,
Whose heart is wounded on a day of gloom.
Oh my delight, you who are gone were like green grass
Or a young pigeon whose feathers are not yet grown.
3. They told me he was ill. I went in to see him.
He lies unconscious, and around him there is wailing.
Very ill he is, and now the illness deepens,
And even the doctor can do no more for him.
4. Please God they will be sold in the market !
Come and buy them, you who are in need !
Please God they will be sold under the hammer !
Come and buy them, you who have no children !
5. "If I am long away, you must break my pen."
Yes, and your ink-well, my darling.
"If I am long away, break pen and pencil."
Yes, and your ink-well too, my dear.
6. At the news of their death, my dress gets tangled,
And the mistress of the harem loses her wits.
At the news of their death, my clothes are in disorder,
And the mistress of the harem out of her senses.

C
F
764
539

7. The way to the church shall be strewn with roses ;
Please God they will come to me on the eve of Sunday !
The way to the church shall be strewn with jasmine ;
Please God they will come to me at the feast of the
Khamseen !
8. "You do not know my agony, you who sit at my side ;
"You are in one state and I in another.
"You do not know my agony, you who sit at my side ;
"You are in one state, and I all alone in another."
9. You were well ; what has happened then ?
Did it come on in the evening, or when was it ?
When they told me he was ill, I went in to see him.
The man who was so alive is lying senseless.
10. What did you do in the hour when your soul departed ?
"I drank gall in great draughts of bitterness."
What did you do then in the hour of your soul's
departure ?
You drank gall in great draughts of bitterness.

*Collected in 1941 at Malay-Bardanooha
by E. Tewfik.*

COMMENTARY

The mourner speaks in the person first of the dead man's friend, then of his mother, and finally also of the dead man himself, without any clear transition. Only the dead youth's words are put between quotation marks. ^F764

4. The dead youth was his mother's only surviving son. To give her some consolation the mourner expresses a wish, which cannot be realised, to see children on sale in the market. Adoption is in Egypt an institution copied from abroad. In Upper Egypt it is still unknown even among Christians. Moslem law forbids it. ^C_F [597]

5. To the mother the boy's writing-materials are precious reminders of his youthful promise.

6. Here the mourner describes the mother's dismay at the news of her son's death. The shock is so great that she can no longer put her clothes on straight. ^C_F [152]

7. By Upper Egyptian women Sundays and festivals are observed as days for commemoration of the dead. To show their grief they keep away from church, even for years at a time. At Christmas and Easter the churches are deserted. On the other hand a crowd of women come to disturb the quiet of the cemetery with their tears and shrieks. This Pagan custom is to some extent Christianised by the distribution of gifts to the poor (meat, cakes, etc.) for the repose of the souls of the dead. ^C_F 794 765 769 735

NOTES

113 The notes are those of the Second French Edition of 1942 (Horus, Cairo), except where marked T. These are annotations by the translator.

1. HISTOIRE DE LA NATION EGYPTIENNE, 7 vols, Paris 1931-6. published under the auspices of King Fuad I, and edited by G. Hanotaux.

PRÉCIS DE L'HISTOIRE D'EGYPTE, various authors, 4 vols, Cairo 1932-5.

L'EGYPTE ANCIENNE, MODERNE, CONTEMPORAINE, P. Henaut, S.J., Cairo, 1935.

L'EGYPTE, APERÇU HISTORIQUE ET GÉOGRAPHIQUE, Cairo 1926.

- 1(a) T.—The standard works in English are :
Cromer (Earl of) : MODERN EGYPT, 2 vols, London 1908.
Lloyd (Lord Lloyd of Dolobran) ; EGYPT SINCE CROMER, London 1934.

2. FELLAH, masc. sing., originally one who tills or ploughs the soil ; masc. plural FELLAHEEN ; fem. sing. FELLAHA.

3. DESCRIPTION DE L'EGYPTE, Paris, 1821-9.
These volumes comprise a valuable collection of detailed observations and researches, made in Egypt during the Napoleonic Expedition.

4. Jean Brunhes : LA GÉOGRAPHIE HUMAINE : Paris, 1925.

P. Vidal de la Blache : PRINCIPES DE GÉOGRAPHIE HUMAINE : Paris, 1922.

Lucien Febvre : LE TERRE ET L'ÉVOLUTION HUMAINE : Paris, 1922.

5. T.—Iron ore of excellent quality and in great abundance has recently been discovered in the Western Desert near Aswan; the projected electrification of the Aswan Dam would provide power for smelting it on the spot. The author's original text, which excluded the possibility of far-reaching industrialisation, has accordingly been modified. 113
[135]
6. P. Bovier Lapierte : L'EGYPTE PRÉHISTORIQUE in PRÉCIS D'HISTOIRE D'EGYPTE, Vol. I, pp. 9-14.
7. Mosséri and Audebeau : THE FUNCTION OF CRACKS IN THE SOIL IN THE DRYING AND PERMANENT PURIFICATION OF THE LAND IN EGYPT, in BULLETIN DE L'INSTITUT D'EGYPTE, Vol. V (1922-3), pp. 9-19.
A. Demanféon ; PROBLÈMES ACTUELS ET ASPECTS NOUVEAUX DE LA VIE RURALE EN EGYPT, in ANNALES DE GÉOGRAPHIE, Paris, March 1926, pp. 155-173.
8. 'The word sa'id signifies a raised area of land. The same word also means the surface of the soil, good earth, any good area of land. It was applied by the Arabs in the time of Islam to the southern part of Egypt, because this part is raised above the rest of Egypt. The sa'id is also known by the name of the Southern Region.' Maqrizi : TOPOGRAPHICAL AND HISTORICAL DESCRIPTION OF EGYPT (14th Century). 133
[134]
103]
9. De Morgan : RECHERCHES SUR LES ORIGINES DE L'EGYPTE, Vol. I, p. 67.
10. A. Moret : THE NILE AND EGYPTIAN CIVILISATION, p. 468. 'On the numbers of the population in Pharaonic times the monuments tell us nothing definite. By analogy with modern times one may reckon that Egypt, properly so called, was able to feed eight million inhabitants under the Theban Monarchy.' [161]
Prince Omar Toussoun, in his MÉMOIRES SUR LES FINANCES DE L'EGYPTE DEPUIS LES PHARAONS JUSQU'À NOS JOURS, reckons the number at eighteen millions.
11. 'Suffice it to say that a village which once contained 10,000 souls seemed to the passer-by nothing but a rubbish-heap ; sometimes a few solitary people were to [162]

113 be found there, sometimes not a single inhabitant."
162 THE STORY OF EGYPT, by 'Abd-el-Latif, a 14th-century Arab doctor of Baghdad.

12. In England in 1941, for example, the agricultural population numbered only four million. Since 1900 alone, a quarter of a million persons have left agriculture.

113 13. Figures given by M. Gourou, in his PAYSANS DU
DELTA TONKINOIS, Paris, 1936.

14. Out of the 283,232 persons owning land in this province 216,861 own less than a feddan apiece. The average is two fifths of a feddan.
[423]

15. A French banking-company founded in 1880 for advances against land. The CRÉDIT AGRICOLE is a newer Government foundation for similar purposes.
[453]
[425]

16. THE CADASTRAL SURVEY OF EGYPT, 1891-1907, by Capt. H.G. Lyons, Ministry of Finance, Cairo, 1908.

17. The word WAKF comes from an Arabic root meaning to stop, or be at a standstill. The nearest English word is probably trust, or entail.

[423] 18. The result of this disproportionate increase is that the average held by each small owner has grown less. In 1897 owners of less than five feddans held an average of 1.58 feddans. Today the average is 1.82 feddans a head, which is ridiculously small. So the development of rural property in Egypt has affected small holdings only, increasing their number while lessening their average area, whereas large and medium-sized estates have remained almost unchanged, and continue to cover vast areas. See LES GRANDES LIGNES DE L'ECONOMIE AGRICOLE DE L'EGYPTE, by J. Anhoury, Government Press, Cairo, 1941, p. 64.

19. P. Jouguet, L'EGYPTE AU III^e SIÈCLE, in PRÉCIS D'HISTOIRE D'EGYPTE, Vol. I, p. 393.

20. LE LABOURAGE EN EGYPTE, in BULLETIN DE L'INSTITUT D'EGYPTE, Cairo, 1916, pp. 83-127.

21. The GAFFAF is a period of artificial dryness, occurring as a rule in January and lasting forty days, during which the Government allows no water to remain in the canals, so as to allow them to be cleaned by special gangs at State expense. At the same season, since the crops have little need of water, opportunity is taken to fill the reservoirs, such as those of Aswan and Gebel Awliya. 113
[312
805]
The true low-water period, however, comes in April—June, when the Nile is naturally very low and the daily flow is at its minimum.
22. Hartman ; L'AGRICULTURE DANS L'ANCIENNE EGYPTTE, p. 119.
23. G. Legrain ; LOUQSOR SOUS LES PHARAONS : Légendes et chansons populaires de la Haute-Egypte ; Vromant, Brussels, 1914, p. 171.
24. (T) See also : M.G. Maspero ; CHANSONS POPULAIRES RECUEILLIES DANS LA HAUTE-EGYPTE. N. G. Mavris ; CONTRIBUTION À L'ETUDE DE LA CHANSON POPULAIRE ÉGYPTIENNE.
24. M. Tissot ; ETUDE SUR LE CALENDRIER COPTE ET SES EPHÉMÉRIDES, Mourès, Alexandrie, 1867.
DEVISES QUI ACCOMPAGNENT LES NOMS DES MOIS COPTES DANS LE LANGAGE POPULAIRE ARABE EN EGYPTTE, by Y. Artin Pasha, in BULLETIN DE L'INSTITUT D'EGYPTE 1891, pp. 250-267.
25. According to a study by Ibneth-Saty' ('Aisha 113
'Abdur-Rahman) published in AL-AHRAM for the 17th, 464
18th, and 19th February 1937 there were 25,000 children 857
between 8 and 15 years of age employed in that year in this unhealthy labour. Their day began at 5 a.m. and lasted without any definite interval until 9 p.m. There are in Egypt about a hundred such factories preparing cotton for export, in which the fellaheen work under deplorable conditions. "During his recent tour in Gharbiya H.M. King Farouk visited the TEFTESH (estate) of Sakka, belonging to the State Domains.... In the room where the cotton bales were being pressed His Majesty observed that the pressing with hands and feet was extraordinarily fatiguing to the fellaheen,

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[464]
857

and even prejudicial to their health". LA PATRIE (a Cairo newspaper), 10th November 1936.

26. AL-MUSSAWAB, Cairo, 28th June 1935.
27. [651] "Every male above 9 years and below 25 years of age who is accustomed to agricultural labour may be levied for such labour by the administrative authorities at the wage customary in the locality."
28. [249]
[136] GELECHIA GOSSYPIELLA SAUNDERS. The boll-worm properly so called is EARIAS INSULANA, and the leaf-worm, also a great pest, is PRODENIA LITURA F.
29. [465] Proclamation No. 258 of 1942 fixed the minimum wage for this type of work at 7½ piastres a day.
30. Between 1942 and 1945 some rises occurred in wage rates, while the official cost-of-living index rose to 300 (1939-100).
31. [249] One feddan produces from 4 to 5 CANTARS of cotton, according to the quality of the seed. In 1936 there was a record average of 6.16 CANTARS.
32. AL-AHRAM, 3.11.36. It should be noted that over-population affects the relation between supply and demand.
33. [426]
[735] The solution proposed by the authorities is that the Government should take over debts to money-lenders and deduct a small amount from the fellah's annual revenues until they are paid off.
34. Ernest Chantre : RECHERCHES ANTHROPOLOGIQUES EN EGYPTES : Rey, Lyons, 1904.
35. J. de Morgan : RECHERCHES SUR L'ORIGINE DES EGYPTIENS : Leroux, Paris, 1909.
36. Dr. Abbas Pasha: FIXITÉ DE LA RACE DANS LA FEMME EGYPTIENNE : BULLETIN OF ROYAL GEOGRAPHICAL SOCIETY, Cairo, Vol. VI, pp. 461-70.
37. Vonderheyden : LE HENNÉ CHEZ LES MUSULMANS DE L'AFRIQUE DU NORD : JOURNAL DES AFRICANISTES, Paris, 1934, Vol. IV, pp. 55-61 and 179-202.
38. [302] There are various formulae, but the commonest have an antimony base, with an admixture of charcoal, lamp-black or soot.

39. T.—This is not quite true. Fellaheen are frequently to be seen in the Nile and in the canals, swimming and splashing about for pleasure after a hot day's work. 113
[515]
526
40. T.—In 1943 the cheaper cotton stuffs were selling at a controlled price of P.T. 6 a metre, and a tailor would ask at least 15 piastres for the work. [463]
435
41. T.—At Akhmim and Nagada in Upper Egypt a considerable weaving-industry still flourishes. The latter has a considerable trade with the Sudan. [288]
42. Dr. Theodore Bilharz (d. 1862) was a German lecturer at the Cairo School of Medicine. In 1858 he solved the mystery of this endemic disease by discovering the parasite that causes it, and thus made attack upon it possible. [744]
43. Department of Public Health : REPORTS AND NOTES ON ANKYLOSTOMIASIS AND BILHARZIASIS IN EGYPT : Government Press, Cairo, 1924,
This work contains a complete bibliography on the two diseases, with an account of their ravages in various villages of Egypt, and of the Government's attempts to fight them.
44. 'Ibnet ish-Shaty' : EL-RIF EL MASRI (THE EGYPTIAN COUNTRYSIDE), p. 125.
45. In 1935 Egypt imported 7,888 tons of coffee beans from Java, Santos and Yemen. [439]
46. See the ANNUAL REPORT for 1938 of the Central Bureau of Information on Narcotics. However, in a technical essay in the REVUE DES QUESTIONS SOCIALES (July 1940, pp. 94-106) entitled IS BLACK TEA HARMFUL TO THE HEALTH AND WORK OF THE PEASANTRY? the author (who remains anonymous) feels justified in giving a negative answer. [272]
47. The famous Egyptian cigarettes are all made of imported tobacco. The intention was to avoid the danger of hasheesh as well as to gratify the Turkish Government. (The smoking of very cheap cigarettes has now become extremely common among the fellaheen. - T, 1945.) [276]
48. BAMIA and MOLOKHIA are two mucilaginous plants. 241
The former, known in British colonies as OKRA, is 262

241
262

HIBISCUS ESULENTUS. Abu-l-'Abbas el Nabati, who visited Egypt in 1216, gives a clear description of BAMIA, which is cooked in salted water. MOLOKHIYA, TORCHORUS OTTORIUS, or Jews Mallow, is chopped fine and cooked in oil to make a green, sticky soup. Both vegetables were known to the ancient Egyptians.

[252]

113

49. The figures are : Mgo 1.988, Ca 0.284, K 02.886. See P. Schruppf-Pietron, LA TENUEUR EN MINÉRAUX DE LA NOURRITURE DU FELLAH, in BULLETIN DE L'INSTITUT D'EGYPTE, Cairo, 1932, pp. 153-75.

50. T.—See on this subject J. W. McPherson, THE MOULEDS OF EGYPT, Cairo, 1942.

51. See article on SURVIVANCES EGYPTIENNES by 'Abbas Bayoumi, on pp. 279-87 of the BULLETIN OF THE ROYAL GEOGRAPHICAL SOCIETY, which contains a comparison of magical texts.

51a. See Appendix A.

52. LES SURVIVANCES DE L'EGYPTE ANTIQUE DANS LE FOLKLORE EGYPTIEN MODERNE : Bosc et Riou, Lyons, 1929.

53. See note 50, also Elie Sidawy, LES FOIRES OU MOULEDS DE L'ISLAM : REVUE DU MONDE EGYPTIEN, 1921.

[527]

54. The name means "Breathing the Freshness". This very ancient Spring feast falls on the Coptic Easter Monday and is always a public holiday.

55. The last three are called HALAWA SIMSIMIYA, HOM-MOS and FUL SUDANY.

[696]

56. According to 1939 statistics more than 60% of the crimes remain unpunished, the culprits having eluded discovery.

See LA CRIMINALITÉ EN PROVINCE, by Muhammad Mustafa el-Kolaly, in REVUE DES QUESTIONS SOCIALES, July 1940, pp. 20-29.

57. The INDEX TO PLACE - NAMES (Egyptian Government Press, Cairo, 1932) gives 14,166. Among them are 7,800 with the prefix 'EZBA, 150 with MIT, 180 with NAZLA, 933 with KAFA and 1436 with NAO'. These prefixes recall their origin. There are barely 4,000 actual villages (nahya).

58. See Lozach and Hug: L'HABITAT RURAL EN EGYPTE: Cairo, 1930.

59. In 1934, of the 30,784 Moslem women who were married 15,248 were spinsters, 13,837 divorcees and 1,709 widows. 12,688 of the total number were below the age of 20. In 1941 the *mudiriya* of Minia had the fewest divorcees, 3.9 a thousand, while in Cairo and Suez the proportion was 12.8 a thousand. E
F
113

60. In 1934, out of 3,278 divorcees 2,396 were dissolved childless marriages. F
[584]

61. T.—The following table shows the actual achievement, which though considerable is much less than the declared aim. The number of school-children in all kinds of schools is shown as a percentage of the number of children between the ages of 5 and 14. F
[162
872]

Year	Children between 5 and 14	Children on school registers (*)	Percentage
1927	3,439,269	770,000	22.9
1931	3,700,000	891,682	24.1
1934	3,905,000	941,760	24.1
1937	4,117,941	1,309,000	31.8
1940	4,335,000	1,563,590	36.1

* estimated figures.

Since 1940, war conditions have made the building of new schools impossible, and Negib el-Hilali Pasha, in his REPORT ON EDUCATIONAL REFORM (Cairo, Dec. 1943), admitted that the elementary system was, as a whole, a failure, and that new directives were necessary. The problem is to evolve a genuinely rural school in the village.

62. Selim Hassan : SURVIVALS OF ANCIENT EGYPTIAN CUSTOMS IN MODERN EGYPT (in Arabic) in the BULLETIN OF THE SOCIETY OF THE FRIENDS OF COPTIC ART, Vol. II, 1936, pp. 47-71.

63. T.—About the middle of August, when the Nile has reached its highest, the dam of the now filled-in canal at Fumm el-Khalig in Cairo was formerly cut with great ceremony, and a doll (in antiquity an alive woman) was thrown into the rushing floods. (These Festivities are still held, culminating in a firework display attended by the Governor and notables, and the day is a public holiday.) E
F
[796
527]

F
113

See E.W. Lane : **MANNERS AND CUSTOMS OF THE MODERN EGYPTIANS** : Everyman Library,

F 63a. T.—There seems no justification for connecting
[192] the Arabic RIF with the French RIVE.

64. In the United States, however, for example in
F Tennessee, cotton carnivals take place. In the town
[527] of Memphis exhibitions and processions with carts are
[171] organised for four days in May. The first festival took
place in 1931, and very soon the carnival became an
extremely popular holiday.

See J. Taylor : **TENNESSEE TABLEAUX**, in **THE NATIONAL GEOGRAPHIC MAGAZINE** for May 1939.

65. Winifred Blackman : **THE FELLAHIN OF UPPER EGYPT** : Harrap, 1927.

66. T.—Retranslated from the French, which gives no reference.

67. Muhammad El-Kolaly : **ESSAI SUR LES CAUSES DE LA CRIMINALITÉ EN EGYPTÉ** : Librairie de Droit et de Jurisprudence, Paris, 1939.

F 68. KHAWAGA is the usual term for a Christian merchant,
[563] generally a Greek, but in Upper Egypt often a Copt.
[443] In Cairo and Lower Egypt it is the usual word for a
[186] European. Its use implies a certain respect, and even servility.

C 69. T.—The early hermits of the Egyptian deserts
F were first assembled into monastic communities by
[175] St. Pachomius about 320 A.D. near the existing village
[346] of Faw, just south-west of Nag' Hammadi in Upper Egypt. There are some remains of a church, which was probably founded by him. His name, in the form BAKHOUM, is still very common in Coptic families.

See A.J.B. in **THE ANCIENT COPTIC CHURCHES OF EGYPT**.

70. **REPORT OF THE FINANCE COMMISSION ON THE DRAFT BUDGET FOR 1941-2.**

71. Speech in the Chamber of Deputies, December 1939.

F 72. T.—Egyptian colloquial Arabic is as far from the
[191] language of the Koran as Italian is from Latin. In theory the written style of modern Arabic is Koranic,

but in fact it has been influenced considerably both by 191
the colloquial and by modern European languages.
Conservatives attempt to maintain, and reformers to
narrow, the wide gap which still remains.

73. **MODERN EGYPT**, by the Earl of Cromer : Macmillan, London, 1908. The second of the two volumes deals with the social condition of Egypt. 113

74. **THE BOOK OF AGRICULTURAL COOPERATION**, by Ibrahim Rashad, Director of the Department of Co-operation in the Ministry of Agriculture : Government Press, Cairo, 1935 (in Arabic). The second of the two volumes deals with Egyptian practice.

75. See an excellent study in Arabic by Dr Sayyid Karim in the review **EL-IMARA (Architecture)**, No. 11 for 1941, pp. 51-64 : **VILLAGE REFORM : THE MODEL OR THE TRADITIONAL VILLAGE !**

76. 'Successive Governments have spent L.E. 14,000,000 [746
to pay off debts on property, that is to say to save the 735]
big landowners, who do not number above 13,000.
This means that these privileged persons have received
an average of L.E. 1,000 each, which has been paid
out by the Treasury on the pretext of maintaining
agricultural prosperity.

'The Government has this year allotted L.E. 17,000
to the establishment of social centres. This means
that each poor fellah is to have half a piastre. If we
add to this the expense of supplying drinking-water
and free medical treatment, the sum set aside for the
poor by the Government is no more than a few piastres
a head.' (AL-INZAR, Minia, 3.3.1941)

77. Draft Budget for 1941-2, in the Annals of the Chamber of Deputies for April 1941.

See also: **Ibnet ish-Shaty' : THE QUESTION OF THE FELLAH : THE REFORM OF VILLAGE EDUCATION, DEFECTS IN THE PRESENT SYSTEM**, pp. 112-131.

Taha Bey Hussein : **THE FUTURE OF CULTURE IN EGYPT** (1938), Vol. II, pp. 94-125 on **ELEMENTARY EDUCATION**.

Jacques Tagher : **THE PROBLEM OF EDUCATION IN EGYPT** (1942), pp. 59-63.

(The last three are all in Arabic.)

- 113 78. 'Aly Shamsy Pasha, Speech in the Chamber, December 1939.
79. A VILLAGE SUMMER SCHOOL, article in THE SOCIAL WORKERS' BULLETIN, May 1938.
80. 'Abdul-Halim Abu-Seif Radi, 7.4.1941.
81. Apostolic Letter to the Mexican Bishops, 28.3.1937; section on the peasantry.
- 785 82. The fasting month of Ramadan is succeeded by the
796 month of Shawwal, the first three days of which are a
527 great public holiday, the Lesser Bairam. About two
months later comes the other great holiday, the four
days of the Great Bairam.

GLOSSARY

The Arabic words are spelt so as to give English readers as close an idea as possible of the correct pronunciation. ^C_F 104
Q is put for the Arabic *qaf*, almost inaudible in Cairo and the Delta, but usually sounded in Upper Egypt like a hard *g*.

- areiq* —A water-pot with a spout, holding about $\frac{1}{2}$ gallon.
'asha —evening meal.
ardeb —198 litres or $4\frac{1}{2}$ cantars.
'arif —Coptic cantor or lay clerk, often a blind man.
'arussa —bride or engaged girl; or a doll.
Al-Azhar —the ancient Islamic University of Cairo, founded A.D. 988.
balad —town, country, village.
ballas —large round two-eared jar, in which women carry water on their heads.
bandar —provincial capital.
barari —dried-up marshes.
bur —uncultivated or desert lands.
cantar —about 100 lbs. (of cotton)
daira —office of an estate.
dekka —bench.
'ezba —village, privately owned, for the workers of an estate.
fass —hoe.
feddan —a little more than one acre.
fitama —weaning.
gallabiya —long outer robe of men.
gamoossa —female water-buffalo.
garuf —winnowing-fork of wood.
ghada —midday meal.
ghaffir —watchman.
hagg —one who has made the pilgrimage to Mecca.
halla —metal cooking-plate.
ilzamiya —public elementary school.
kassabiya —leveller.
kirat —one twenty-fourth of a feddan.

C	kohl	—antimony, a black eye-salve, at once decorative and hygienic.
F		
104	kuz	—drinking-mug: often a tin with a handle.
	kuttāb	—village school of old Koranic type.
	lifa	—palm-tree fibre.
	libda	—felt skullcap.
	māmur	—chief constable.
	māzun	—religious officer, who records marriages, divorces, etc.
	mahr	—dowry to the bride.
	markaz	—police district or its headquarters.
	mastaba	—a raised seat built against a wall.
	mawwal	—erotic song.
	milaya	—large black veil for women.
	mihrat	—plough.
	moawen	—assistant to the chief constable of a markaz.
	mudir	—governor of a province.
	mudiriya	—province, rather like an English county.
	mulid	—birthday feast of a Moslem saint.
	nabbut	—long stick or cudgel.
	nazir	—superintendent of an estate.
	norag	—threshing machine.
	'omda	—head-man of a village or small town.
	oke	—about 2 lbs. 12 oz.
	okiya	—one twelfth of a roll = 1½ oz.
	rayess	—foreman, overseer.
	roll	—one hundredth of a cantar = about 1 lb.
	saqia	—water-raising machine with wheels and a chain of buckets.
	sarraḥ	—tax-collector.
	sebakḥ	—natural manure
	semad	—chemical manure.
	shaduf	—water-raising machine with a long pole, worked by hand.
	sheikh	—old man or notable.
	shoona	—a large enclosed area for storing cotton or grain.
	tabliya	—very low table for meals.
	taqiya	—calico skull-cap.
	tisht	—large basin or shallow tub.
	wakf	—a peculiar form of entail or trust.
	zahḥafa	—leveller.

3: Ayrout M-5 (ca. 1935) 1945

MR13 Fellahin MR13

Egypt MR 1

EGYPTIAN MONEY

L.E. 1 (Egyptian Pound, called "guinea") = L1. Os. 6d. E
F

P.T. 1 = 1/100 of L.E. , a piastre, or a big piastre
(Arabic *qirsh* or *qirsh asgh*) = 2 1/2 d. 436

P.T. 1/2 = 5 milliemes ; a small piastre, or "ta'rifa".

1 millieme = about a farthing.